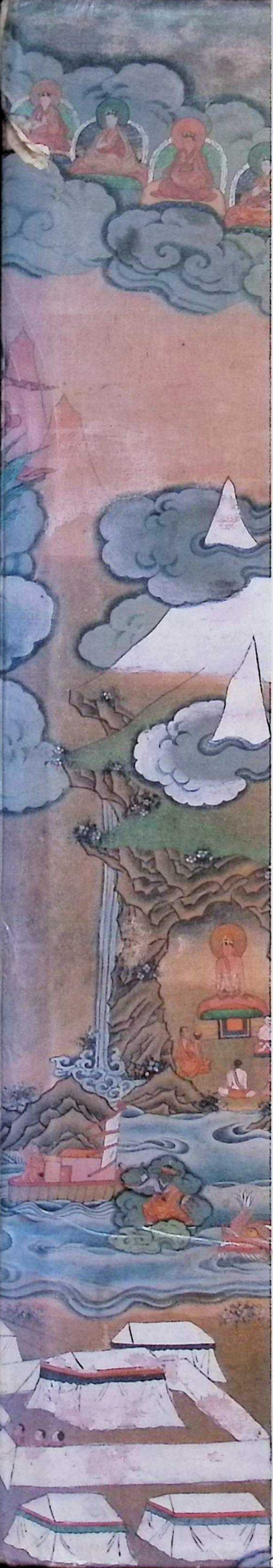
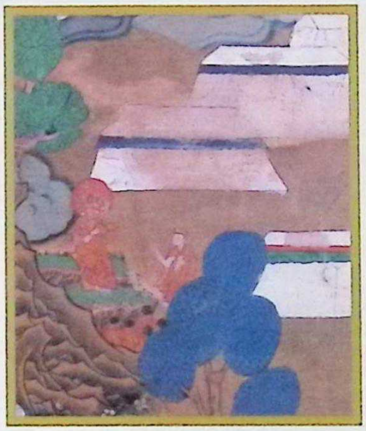


Karmapa THE SACRED PROPHECY

KAGYU THUBTEN CHÖLING



FOREWORD BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

Karmapa THE SACRED PROPHECY

KAGYU THUBTEN CHÖLING

FOREWORD BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

While visiting Karma Monastery in Nangchen, Eastern Tibet, the great nineteenth century master Chogyur Dechen Lingpa was granted a prophetic vision of twenty-one incarnations of Karmapa, the supreme head of the Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Chogyur Lingpa described his vision in detail to Karmai Khenchen Rinchen Tarjay, Supreme Abbot of Karma Monastery, who painted a representation of the prophecy on silk. Disciples of Chogyur Lingpa committed his oral description of the vision to writing, in a text later printed in woodblock at the renowned monastery of Mindroling. Translated into English for the first time in this book, the prophecy of Chogyur Lingpa is cherished by the Kagyu lineage as a sacred document indicating the qualities and activities of the future Karmapas. Photographs of the nineteenth century woodblock text, as well as the silk painting by Karmai Khenchen, accompany the translation.

It is our hope that the present volume will serve to inform readers new to Tibetan Buddhism, inspire established practitioners, and, perhaps most importantly, offer insight into our very real potential to develop the qualities of power, loving kindness, and wisdom which the Karmapa himself fully embodies.

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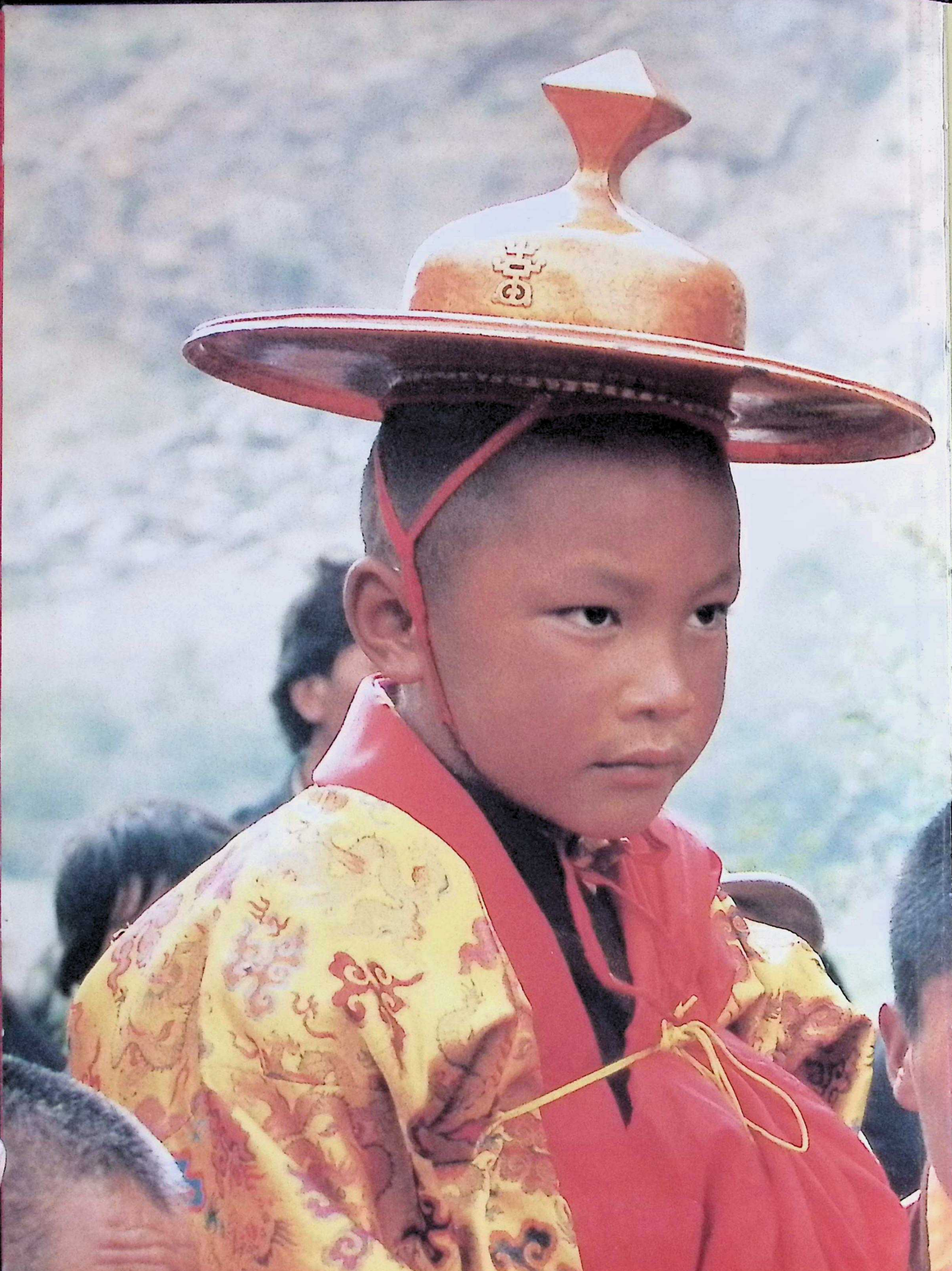
Karmapa THE SACRED PROPHECY

FOREWORD BY HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA



Prophesied by the Buddha in sutra, Karmapa is the Bodhisattva
Chenrezig, embodiment of the compassion of all Enlightened Ones,
who by force of his aspirations and vows
will continue to take birth until all sentient beings are free.

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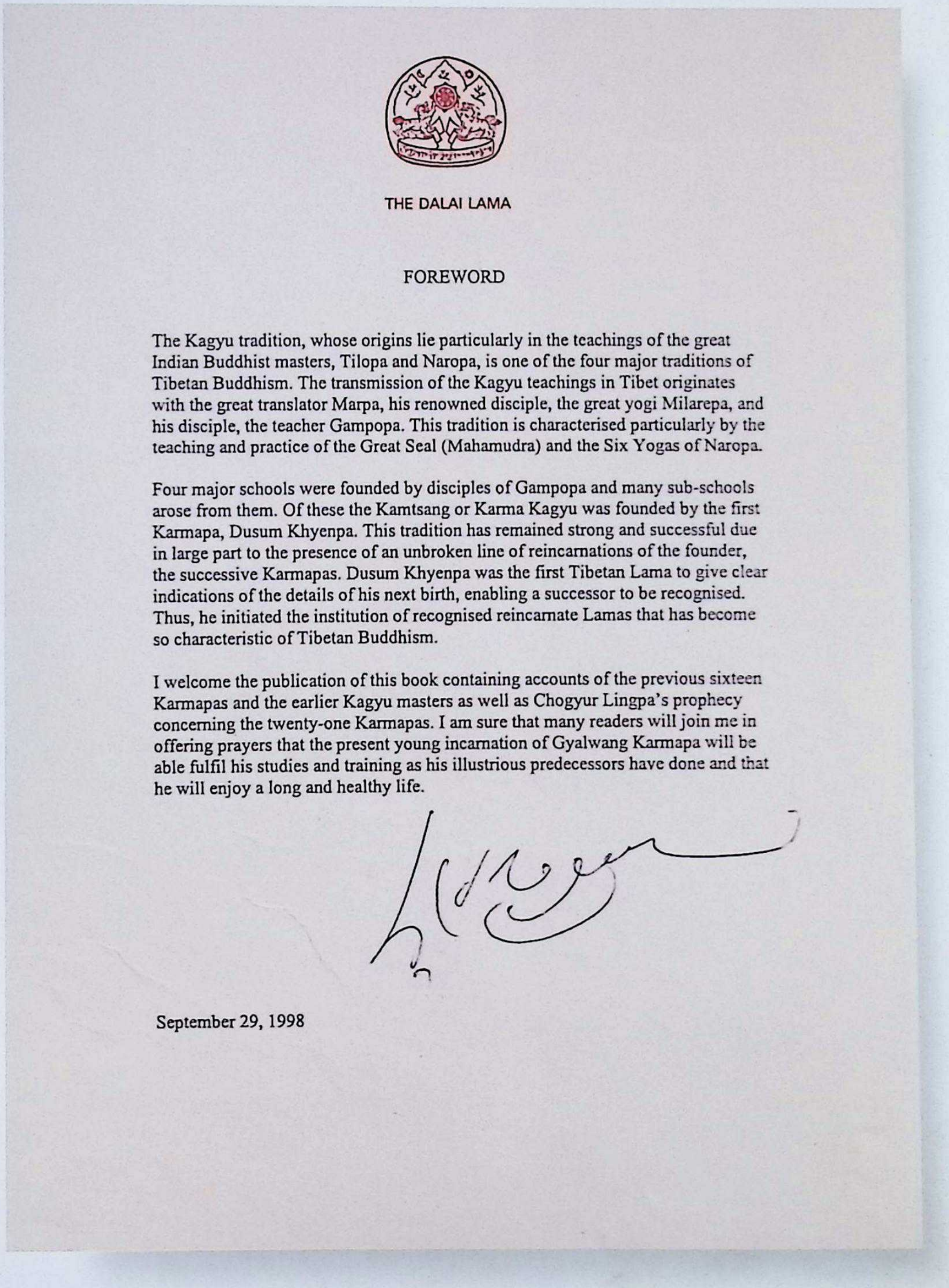
His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama examines the cloth painting depicting Chogyur Lingpa's vision of the twenty-one Karmapas.

Foreword



THE DALAI LAMA

FOREWORD

The Kagyu tradition, whose origins lie particularly in the teachings of the great Indian Buddhist masters, Tilopa and Naropa, is one of the four major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The transmission of the Kagyu teachings in Tibet originates with the great translator Marpa, his renowned disciple, the great yogi Milarepa, and his disciple, the teacher Gampopa. This tradition is characterised particularly by the teaching and practice of the Great Seal (Mahamudra) and the Six Yogas of Naropa.

Four major schools were founded by disciples of Gampopa and many sub-schools arose from them. Of these the Kamtsang or Karma Kagyu was founded by the first Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa. This tradition has remained strong and successful due in large part to the presence of an unbroken line of reincarnations of the founder, the successive Karmapas. Dusum Khyenpa was the first Tibetan Lama to give clear indications of the details of his next birth, enabling a successor to be recognised. Thus, he initiated the institution of recognised reincarnate Lamas that has become so characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism.

I welcome the publication of this book containing accounts of the previous sixteen Karmapas and the earlier Kagyu masters as well as Chogyur Lingpa's prophecy concerning the twenty-one Karmapas. I am sure that many readers will join me in offering prayers that the present young incarnation of Gyalwang Karmapa will be able fulfil his studies and training as his illustrious predecessors have done and that he will enjoy a long and healthy life.

September 29, 1998

Introduction

The story of Tibetan Buddhism begins more than twenty-five hundred years ago in India, when a young noble named Siddhartha, a member of the Shakya clan, set himself the task of solving the problem of human suffering. Stealing away from his father's palace and exchanging his rich robes for the rags of a wandering ascetic, Siddhartha began his journey toward one of the most fruitful spiritual discoveries of all time. He spent years practicing austerities under the guidance of contemporary masters, but the ultimate goal continued to elude him. Finally, in a place called Bodhgaya, Siddhartha sat under the branches of a bodhi tree, determined to meditate until he either discovered the answer he sought or died in the attempt.

Siddhartha attained a state of meditative concentration in which he recognized the fundamental, eternal, unchanging nature of his own mind. In so doing, he saw through the conventional notion of a self that conceives of the rest of the world as "other," and thereby experiences pain and pleasure in relation to it. Transcending dualistic experience, he realized the truth of the nature of mind that transcends thought and expression. Upon emerging from this profound state of concentration, he was Siddhartha no more. He had become *Buddha*, which in the Sanskrit tongue of Indian mystics means "the one who is awake." In many of the Buddhist scriptures, he is referred to as Buddha Shakyamuni, which means "the awakened one, sage of the Shakyas."

Soon after attaining enlightenment, Buddha Shakyamuni began teaching, sharing his insight with those around him who asked for guidance. For more than forty years, he taught extensively throughout India, and after his passing his disciples began to preserve in writing the methods and practices he had given them. Over the centuries, the Buddha's teachings spread to many neighboring countries, including Tibet, within whose isolated mountain monasteries the precious teachings were cultivated at an unparalleled level of profundity by successive generations of enlightened masters. These masters typically passed their entire store of wisdom to their most promising disciples, who in turn perfected the practices and passed their attainments on to the next generation of students. In this way, a variety of closely related schools, or lineages, of Buddhist practice sprang up across Tibet.

Within the context of Tibetan Buddhism, the importance of lineage extends far beyond the ordinary sense of a particular line of inheritance or descent. Lineage is a sacred trust through which the integrity of Buddha's teachings is preserved intact as it is transmitted from one generation to the next. The vital link through which the spiritual tradition is nourished and maintained is the profound connection between an enlightened master and perfectly devoted disciple. The master-disciple relationship is considered extremely sacred by all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Golden Rosary

The various lineages of Tibetan Buddhism share many teachings in common. Over time, however, each has developed a different emphasis or approach, according to the particular insight or method of its founding masters. The present book focuses on the Karma Kagyu lineage, which gives central prominence to the role of secret meditation instructions passed orally from master to student. With great reverence, the unbroken succession of masters who have preserved and transmitted the instructions of the Karma Kagyu tradition is referred to as the *Golden Rosary*.

The roots of the Karma Kagyu lineage extend back to tenth-century India, where the enlightened *yogin* Tilopa received the core teachings directly from the primordial Buddha, Dorje Chang. Tilopa transmitted the teachings to the scholar Naropa, who had resigned as abbot of India's most prestigious Buddhist university expressly to follow his master, Tilopa. These instructions were carried intact into Tibet by Marpa, who made three arduous journeys across the Himalayas to receive *vajrayana* teachings from Naropa and other teachers, which he subsequently translated into Tibetan.

Marpa passed the lineage to Milarepa, perhaps the most beloved of Tibet's saints, who expressed the essence of the transmissions in a series of songs recited in Tibet to this day. Milarepa passed the teachings to Gampopa who had been prophesied by the Buddha to be the guardian of the teachings on the ultimate nature of mind. Gampopa, in turn, passed the lineage to Dusum Khyenpa, who became known as the first Karmapa. Shortly before his death, Dusum Khyenpa entrusted his closest disciple with a letter describing the conditions under which he would be reborn in order to continue his efforts on behalf of all sentient beings. In due course, his reincarnation was discovered in precise accordance with the details of the prediction letter, and formally enthroned as Karma Pakshi, the second Karmapa.

Historically, Dusum Khyenpa was the first lama recognized to intentionally reincarnate as a particular master. In all of his successive incarnations, the Karmapa has served as the primary source of refuge for all followers of the Karma Kagyu lineage. As the central teacher of the Kagyu lineage, he also ensures that the Kagyu teachings are transmitted in their entirety and preserved for future generations.

The Karmapa is an extraordinary individual, whose life in itself may be seen as a profound teaching. He clearly manifests the potential inherent in all living beings to fully develop the qualities of perfect wisdom, unconditional love, and all-pervasive compassion. Moreover, he shows us the perfection of the master-disciple relationship in the sacred bond formed with his closest disciples in each incarnation, who become his guardians and teachers when he next takes birth.

The Sacred Prophecy

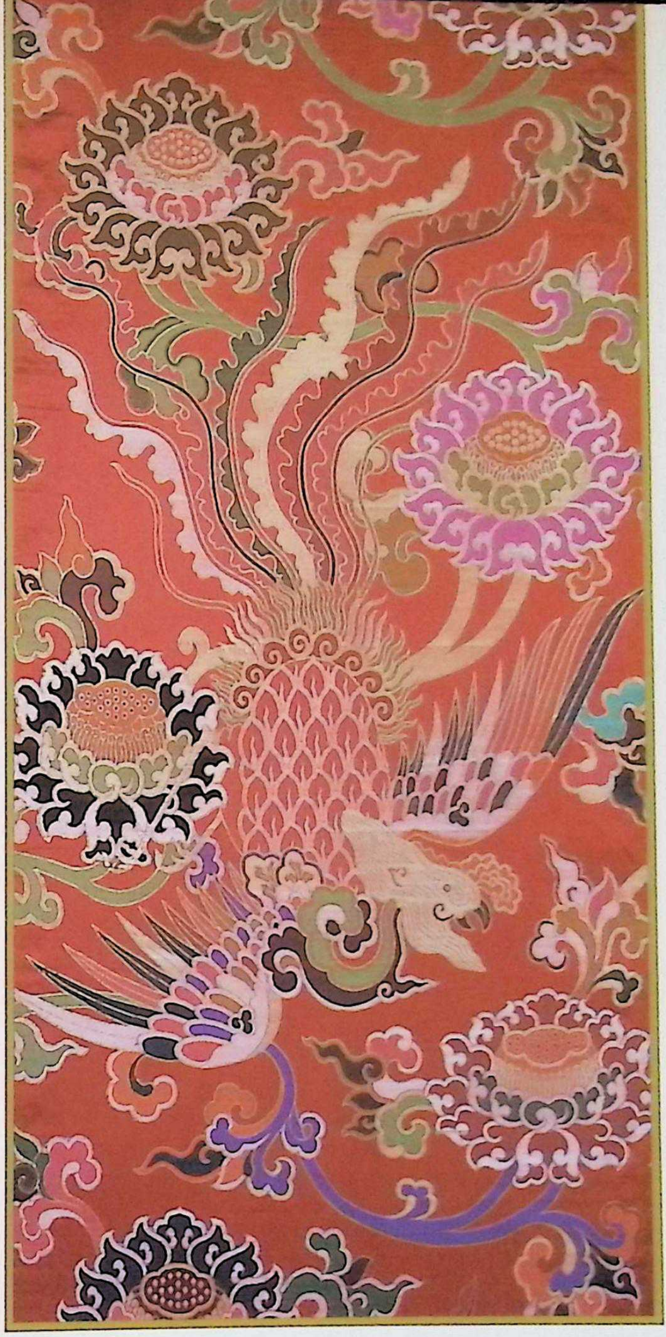
The present volume is distinguished by its presentation of a prophecy granted to the *tertön* Chogyur Lingpa, an enlightened master who played a pivotal role in the nonsectarian renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism during the nineteenth century. While visiting Karma Monastery in Nangchen, eastern Tibet, Chogyur Lingpa had a vision, in which he received a prophecy from Guru Rinpoche, of twenty-one incarnations of the Karmapas. These included the fourteen incarnations who had already taken birth up until the time of Chogyur Lingpa's own life, and seven successive future incarnations, each appearing in settings indicating the nature of their future activities.

Chogyur Lingpa described his vision in detail to Karmai Khenchen Rinchen Tarjay, Supreme Abbot of Karma Monastery, who instructed artists to depict the vision in murals along the walls of the monastery's main shrine hall. Karmai Khenchen himself painted the vision on cloth. Disciples of Chogyur Lingpa meanwhile committed his personal description of his vision to writing, in a text later printed in woodblock at the renowned monastery of Mindroling. Translated into English for the first time in this book, the prophecy of Guru Rinpoche is cherished by the Kagyu lineage as a sacred document indicating the qualities and activities of the future Karmapas. Photographs of the original woodblock text, as well as of the cloth painting rendered by Karmai Khenchen, accompany the translation.

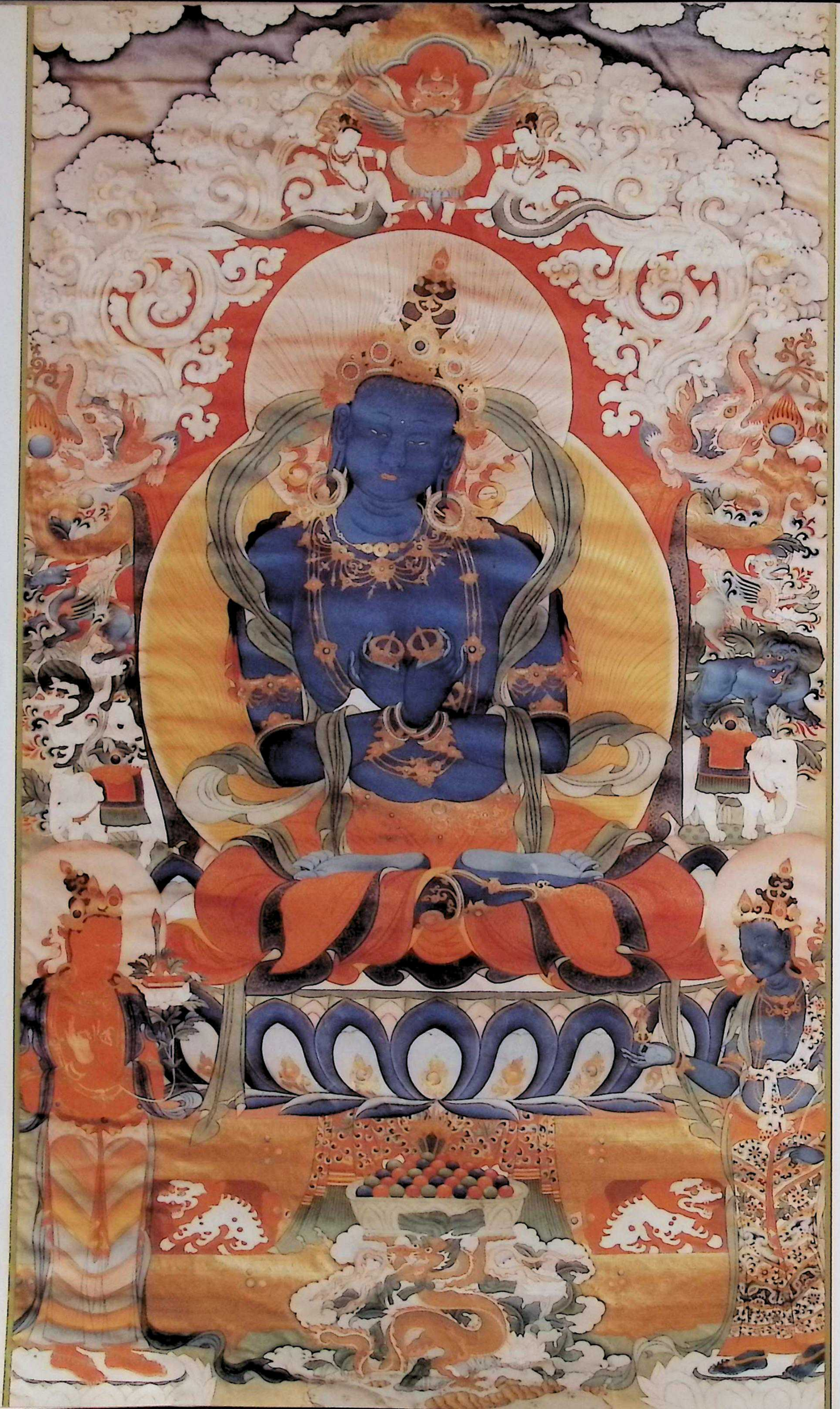
His Holiness, The Seventeenth Karmapa

One of the remarkable aspects of Chogyur Lingpa's vision of Guru Rinpoche's prophecy is the vivid symbolic correlation between the prophecy and the actual life and activities of the Karmapas who have taken birth since Chogyur Lingpa's time. One of the clearest examples of this correspondence can be seen in the life of the Seventeenth Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley Dorje, current head of the Karma Kagyu lineage, now residing at Tsurphu Monastery, the traditional Tibetan seat of the Karmapas. The final section of the present volume describes the momentous events surrounding the discovery and enthronement of the Seventeenth Karmapa, and the striking manner in which his life has already begun to fulfill the prophecy granted to Chogyur Lingpa.

For hundreds of thousands of Buddhists, the Karmapa is the living embodiment of the ultimate fruition of Buddhist practice. It is our hope that the biographies contained herein will serve to inform readers new to Tibetan Buddhism, inspire established practitioners, and, perhaps most importantly, offer insight into our very real potential to develop the qualities of power, loving kindness, and wisdom which the Karmapa himself fully embodies.



The Golden Rosary

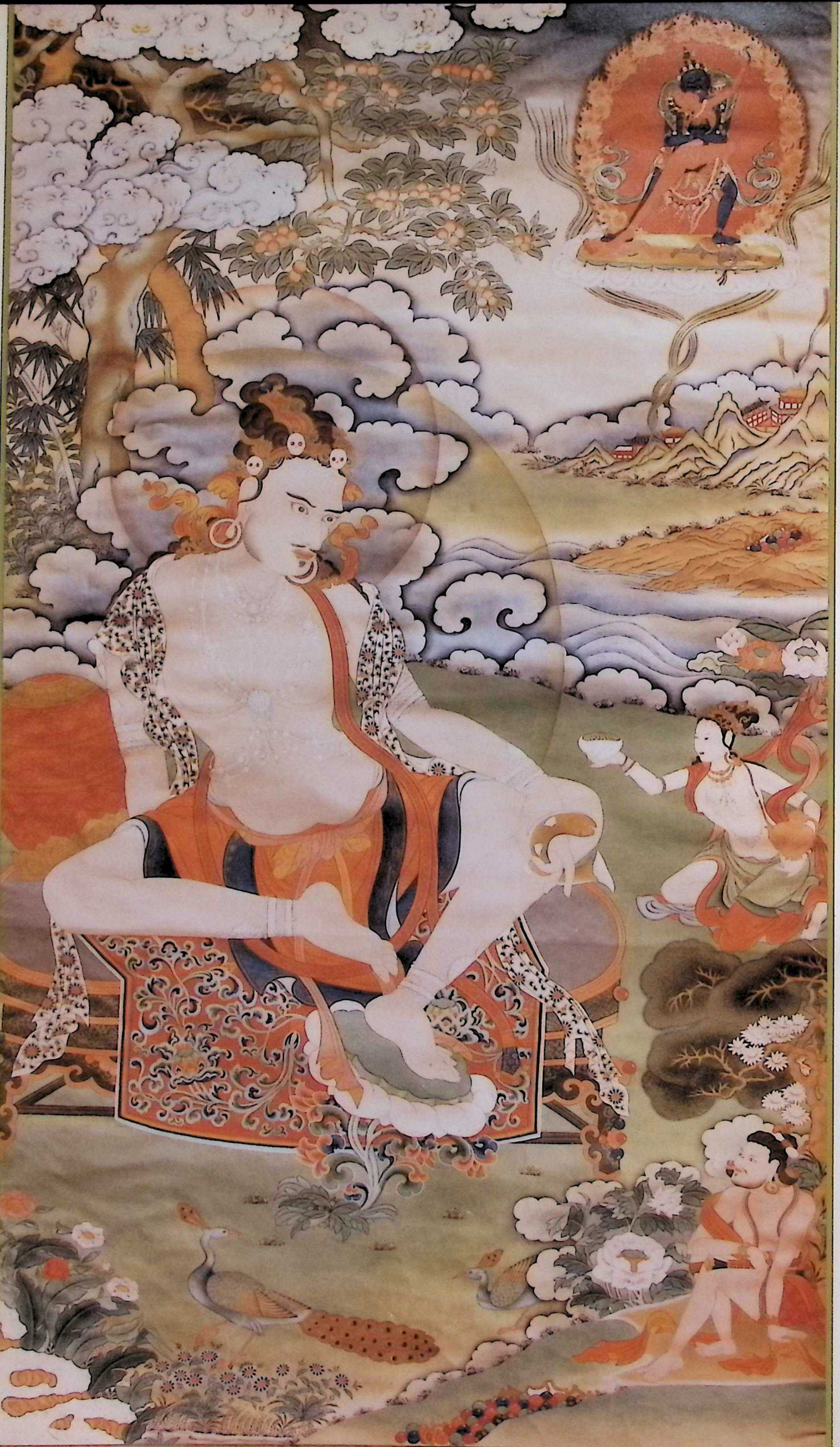


Dorje Chang

The source of the Kagyu lineage, Dorje Chang, is not a historical figure, but rather the manifestation of enlightenment itself. Within the Kagyu tradition, therefore, Dorje Chang is referred to as the Primordial Buddha, or the essence of all Buddhas, whose nature transcends the limitations of form, time, and place. In order to transmit the teachings that were to form the basis of the Kagyu lineage, however, Dorje Chang appeared to the great Indian master Tilopa.

The sacred form in which Dorje Chang manifested to Tilopa represents the three aspects or "bodies" of a fully enlightened Buddha: the *dharmakaya*, or *dharma* body, the *sambhogakaya*, or experience body, and the *nirmanakaya*, or emanation body. Each of the details of Dorje Chang's form reveals an aspect of enlightenment. For example, the color of Dorje Chang's body, like an azure sky, symbolizes the limitless, spacious quality of the awakened mind, which is called the *dharmakaya*. The celestial adornments, such as earrings, crown, and bracelets, represent the lucid clarity of the awakened mind, which is called the *sambhogakaya*. Dorje Chang's human form represents the *nirmanakaya*, the physical manifestation of an enlightened being as perceived by ordinary sentient beings.

The *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*, referred to as the *form bodies* of the Buddha, are the natural expression of the Buddha's impartial loving compassion for all beings. The myriad ways in which the Buddha's compassion manifests are referred to as *skillful means* and include everything from the formal teachings of the Buddha to the living relationship between master and disciple. The bell and *vajra* Dorje Chang holds at the level of the heart represent the union of wisdom and skillful means. Although described individually, these three bodies of a Buddha are indivisible within the display of the enlightened mind, and represent the inherent potential of every living being.



Tilopa 988: 1069

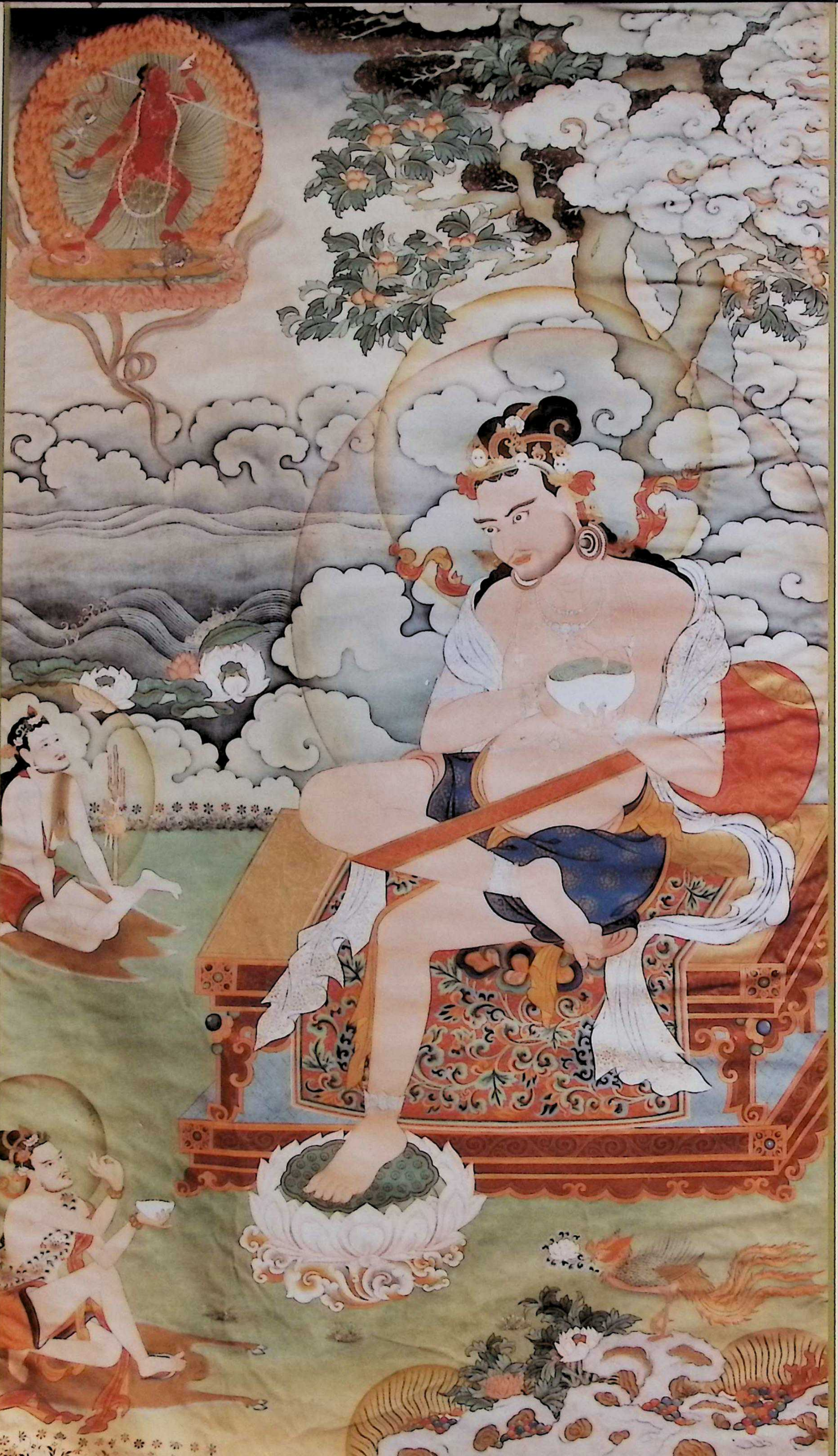
Tilopa was born into a noble family of Sategawu, a town in the country now known as Bangladesh. From the time he was an infant, Tilopa was visited regularly by a *dakini*—a divine manifestation in female form—who appeared as a very old woman. One day, while Tilopa was reciting a Buddhist text and tending water buffalo, the *dakini* appeared before him and asked his name and parentage. When he told her, the *dakini* retorted, "No! Your father is the *Buddha* Khorlo Dechog, and your mother is the Mother of All Buddhas, Vajravarahi! To understand how to tend the herd of experiences in the expanse of enlightenment, you must internalize the *meaning* of the Dharma. Otherwise, you will not be able to understand the books you are reading!"

Taking her words to heart, Tilopa visited temples and requested explanations of Buddha's teaching. His appreciation of the underlying significance of the Buddha's words deepened, and he chose to become a monk in order to devote all his time to learning. His strict observance of monastic vows and personal integrity earned him great respect.

One day, while Tilopa was chanting the *Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom*, the *dakini* appeared and asked if he wished to know what the *sutra* really meant. When he replied that he would, the *dakini* taught him the *tantra* of Khorlo Dechog, which suddenly revealed to him the inexpressible inner meaning of the Buddha's teaching. Raving and shouting, Tilopa climbed to the roof of the monastery, and hurled the sacred text of *The Perfection of Wisdom* into the river. His fellow monks, thinking he'd lost his mind, thereafter relieved him of monastic responsibilities.

Left to himself, Tilopa traveled throughout India seeking *yogins* who held the transmitted wisdom of *tantra*. Because of his faith and devotion, his compassion for beings, and his accumulated merit, he fully received the nectar of their blessings, collecting the *four streams of oral lineage*, which constitute the heart of the Kagyu teaching. With intense dedication, Tilopa devoted himself to perfecting the practices he'd received, going so far as to meditate for twelve years in a charnel ground near Somapuri, keeping his legs chained in the meditation posture.

At the end of this period of intense practice, the *dakini* reappeared and promised Tilopa that he would attain enlightenment if he entered the service of a certain prostitute named Barima, who lived in the city of Pensalna. Tilopa accordingly went to Pensalna, where by night he procured clients for Barima, and by day earned a living pressing oil from sesame seeds. After six years, he achieved enlightenment, and with Barima he rose into the sky above the town, enveloped in rainbow light. Ripening the mind streams of the people of Pensalna, Lord Tilopa established them in various degrees of realization and liberated countless beings. The *primordial Buddha*, Dorje Chang, and Vajravarahi, the embodiment of wisdom, manifested directly to him and bestowed on him the same transmissions he had received from his human masters, to ensure that all his future disciples would benefit from the full potency of their blessing.



Naropa 1016: 1100

The *siddha* Naropa was born to a noble family in Bengal, India. Acutely sensitive to the transient and unsatisfactory character of the world, he began to study at age eleven, and soon excelled in Buddhist scholarship. At twenty-five, he became a monk, and eventually joined the faculty of the great University of Nalanda, where he became one of the four principal abbots.

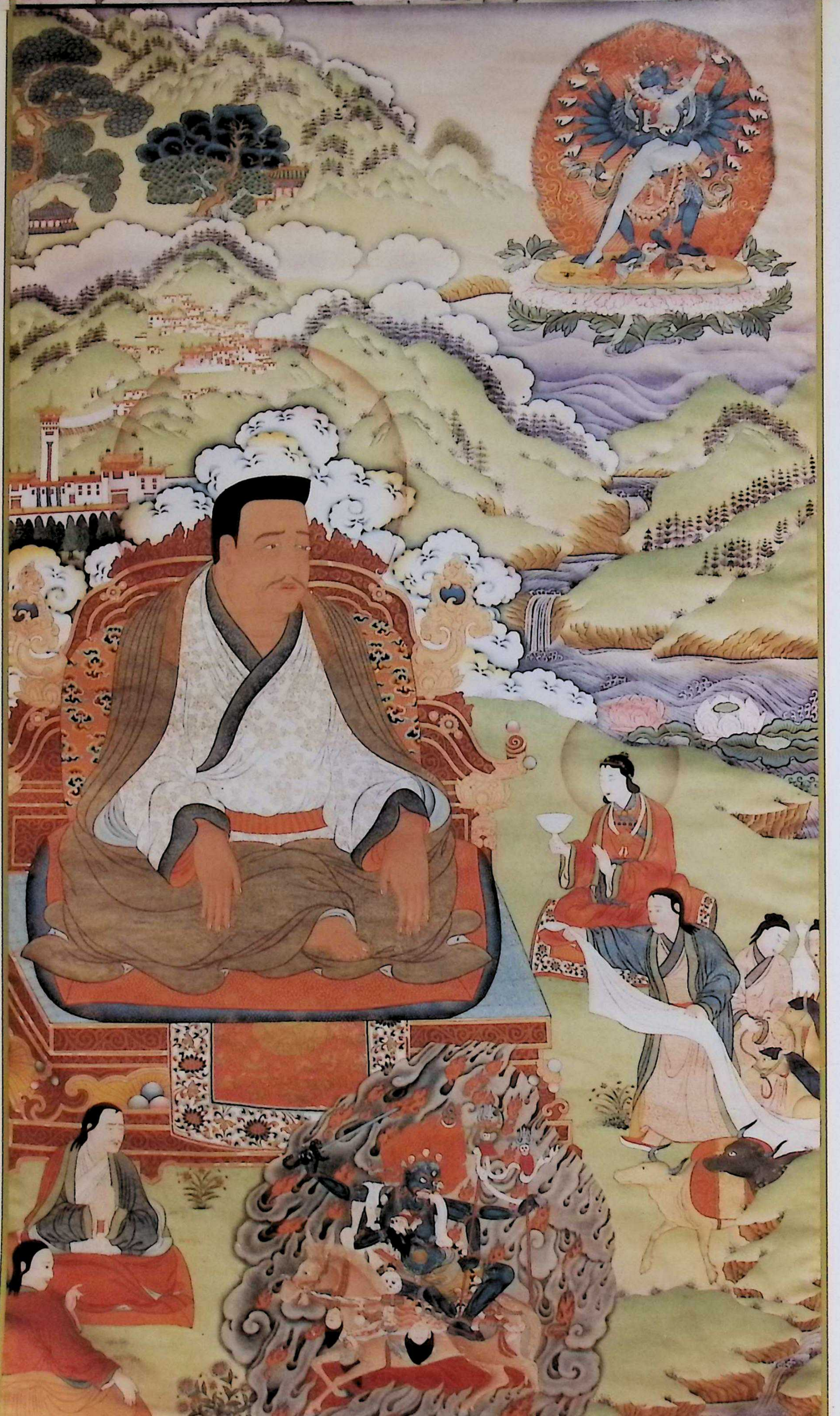
While he was absorbed in study one day, a hideous old woman appeared at his side and asked if he knew the words or the meaning. When Naropa replied that he knew the words, the old woman laughed and danced with delight. Hoping to please her further, Naropa added that he also understood the meaning. Abruptly, the old woman burst into tears. When Naropa inquired into the reason for her distress, she replied, "You spoke the truth when you said you knew only the words, but you lied when you said that you know their meaning." Accordingly, Naropa asked who might know the meaning. "Seek my brother, Tilopa," the old woman advised, "and beg him to teach you the meaning!" So saying, she vanished like a rainbow.

Naropa left the university, and set off with a begging bowl and staff in search of Tilopa. One day he wandered into a river gorge, and found himself maneuvering down a narrow path with rapids on one side and a sheer cliff on the other. There, he encountered a leper woman who had neither hands nor feet. "Go around," she cried, "or leap over me!" Seeing no other choice, Naropa leapt over her. In that instant, the leper rose into the sky. Surrounded by a halo of light, she exclaimed, "How will you ever find the teacher if you cling to appearances through the power of habit?" The scene abruptly vanished, and Naropa fainted.

Such fearsome apparitions repeatedly arose as Naropa searched ever more desperately for his teacher. Only after Naropa finally gave in to despair and was about to take his own life did Tilopa appear. "Why have you avoided me?" Naropa implored. "I have been with you the whole time," Tilopa replied, "but because of your obscured mind, you were tormented by visions and couldn't see me."

Naropa attended his master with intense devotion. One day, Tilopa led him to the top of a high tower, saying, "A disciple of mine would jump from here." Without hesitation, Naropa jumped and landed at the base of the tower, all his bones broken, unable to move. Tilopa came down and asked, "What's wrong, Naropa? Belief in a self is a body which deserves to be broken. Look instead at the secret of your own mind." With a touch of his hand, Tilopa healed Naropa's broken body, and bestowed profound instructions, which Naropa practiced wholeheartedly.

Over a period of twelve years, Naropa endured twelve great ordeals which gradually purified the obscurations of his mind, and awakened the *four kayas*, the ultimate enlightenment of a *Buddha*. After receiving the complete transmissions from Tilopa, he wandered in desolate places, absorbed in the limitless freedom of awareness devoid of clinging, and worked miracles to benefit beings. At last, he settled at the hermitage of Phullahari, and guided many disciples on the path to liberation.



Marpa 1012: 1097

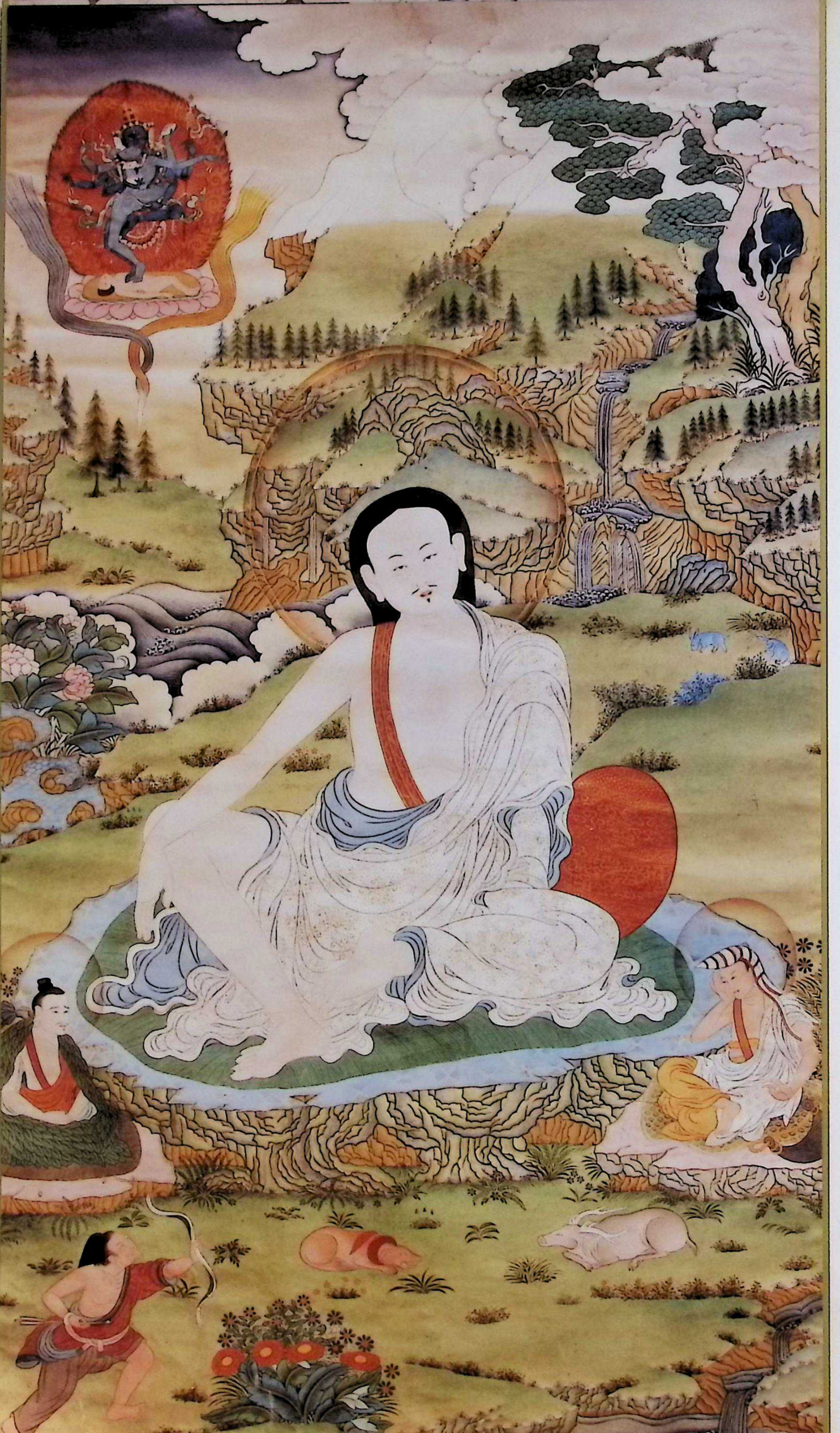
Marpa the Translator was born into a family of wealthy landowners in Lhodrak, in southern Tibet. An adventurous child, he embodied the irrepressible grace of a *heruka*, a heroic *tantric* deity whose fearlessness derives from complete freedom of mind. To instill a sense of discipline, Marpa's father sent him to study translation under Drogmi Lotsawa, a founder of the Sakya lineage. After mastering Sanskrit, Marpa set out for Nepal to obtain the transmissions of *Vajrayana* Buddhism. He received teachings from many learned Nepalese masters; yet when he heard the name of their teacher, Naropa, he found himself overwhelmed by intense devotion. Without concern for his own life, he undertook the arduous journey to India to meet his future master.

Naropa received Marpa with great joy, and after bestowing the empowerments and instructions of the *Hevajra tantra* upon him, set him to meditate. Afterwards, Naropa sent him to a variety of other masters who were direct sources for their respective lineages. The *siddha* Jnanagarbha, for example, clearly emanated the display of the *mandala* of Guhyasamaja, during which Marpa attained the realization of the eighth level of a *bodhisattva* and received the transmission of the *father tantras.* Marpa swam across a poison lake to an island hermitage, where the *siddha* Kukkuripa bestowed upon him the transmission of the *mother tantras.* From the Lord Maitripa, Marpa received the lineage of *Mahamudra*, in which the minds of master and disciple meet as one. In the Sosaling charnel ground, he beheld the female Buddha Vajravarahi, manifesting as a young woman. Cutting open her heart with a crystal knife, she revealed to him the sacred mantra contained therein, and bestowed upon him both transmissions and empowerments.

Through Naropa's kindness, Marpa thus received in his heart the streams of many transmissions. Marpa returned to Tibet, where gifted and fortunate students gathered around him to be guided with the lamp of the lineage instructions. Later, he made a second trip to India, where he translated a vast number of commentaries and *tantras.*

When his foremost student, Milarepa, dreamed of a blue girl with golden eyebrows who told him to ask Marpa for a particular oral transmission, Marpa understood that he must seek further teachings from Naropa. Though already quite old, he set off on the perilous journey to India for the third time. When he arrived, he learned that Naropa had already passed into spiritual realms. Yet certain that sincere prayers would lead him to his master's presence, Marpa searched for months with intense longing and devotion. Finally, a shepherd showed him Naropa's footprint impressed in a quartz boulder at the edge of a forest. Filled with joy, Marpa soon met his teacher once again. Naropa led him to his hermitage, and bestowed upon him the most secret oral instructions.

Prophesying that the Kagyu lineage would flourish, Naropa sent Marpa back to Tibet. At the age of eighty-eight, Marpa dissolved his consciousness into the pure realms. In the same instant, his wife Dagmema dissolved into his heart. Then his own mind passed from his body in the form of a sphere of light, and disappeared into the sky.



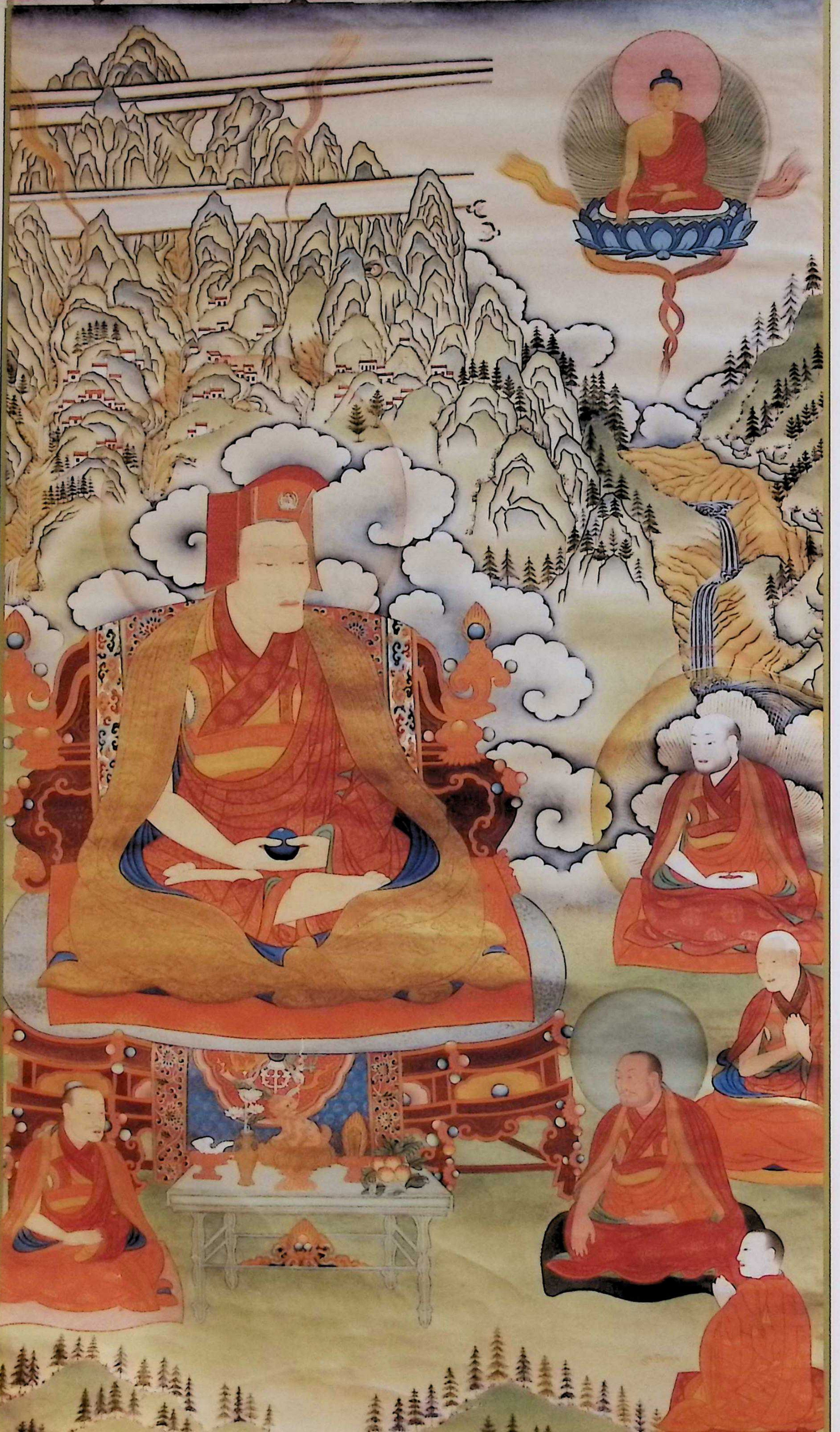
Milarepa 1052: 1135

The precious and wish-fulfilling jewel of Tibet, the great king of yogis, Milarepa, demonstrated through devotion and practice that a sincere student can attain the highest state of freedom in a single human life. Born to a prosperous family in the region of Gungtang, Milarepa was reduced to poverty at an early age when his father died and his uncle took possession of the family's wealth. When Milarepa came of age, his embittered mother sent him away to master black magic so he could avenge the wrong done to his family. He returned the day of his cousin's wedding, and while guests gathered in his uncle's house, he cast a spell that made the central support give way. The house collapsed, killing thirty-five of his family's enemies in one stroke.

Filled with remorse afterwards, Milarepa turned toward the Dharma. Upon hearing the name of the great translator, Marpa, he was moved by an overwhelming sense of devotion. Unable to think of anything else, he set out to meet his future master. The night before Milarepa's arrival, Marpa dreamed that Naropa brought him a tarnished jewel *vajra*. In the dream, he purified the *vajra* with sacred water and mounted it atop a victory banner, from which its illumination filled all space. Marpa understood the dream as a prophecy about Milarepa, and accordingly put Milarepa through many ordeals in order to purify the sins that prevented him from perceiving his own true nature.

Milarepa worked building stone towers at Marpa's behest until his body was covered with running sores. As soon as each structure was nearly complete, Marpa would order him to tear it down, restore the stones to the earth and start over again. Whenever Milarepa attempted to join the other students, Marpa chased him away with harsh words and blows. After six years of constant fear that he would die without obtaining the instructions that would prevent rebirth in the lower realms, Milarepa fell into despair and prepared to take his own life. In that moment, the trial ended and Marpa acknowledged him as his foremost disciple, granting him the complete transmission of his lineage. Milarepa turned all his energy toward practice, persevering as he had with his earlier challenges.

Milarepa withdrew to desolate mountain valleys where, relying on a scant diet of wild nettles, he immersed himself in meditation. Though his body wasted away, his mind fed on bliss. After years of intense practice, he achieved complete liberation. Disciples soon gathered around him, and he set them to practice as he had in remote mountain caves. He became famous throughout Tibet for singing spontaneous Dharma songs that planted the seed of liberation in all who heard them. Several of his disciples, including his sister Peta, attained the *rainbow body*, dissolving into light at the time of death. At the age of eighty-four, Milarepa was escorted to the celestial realm by an assembly of *dakinis*, accompanied by a display of miracles and divine music.



Gampopa 1079: 1135

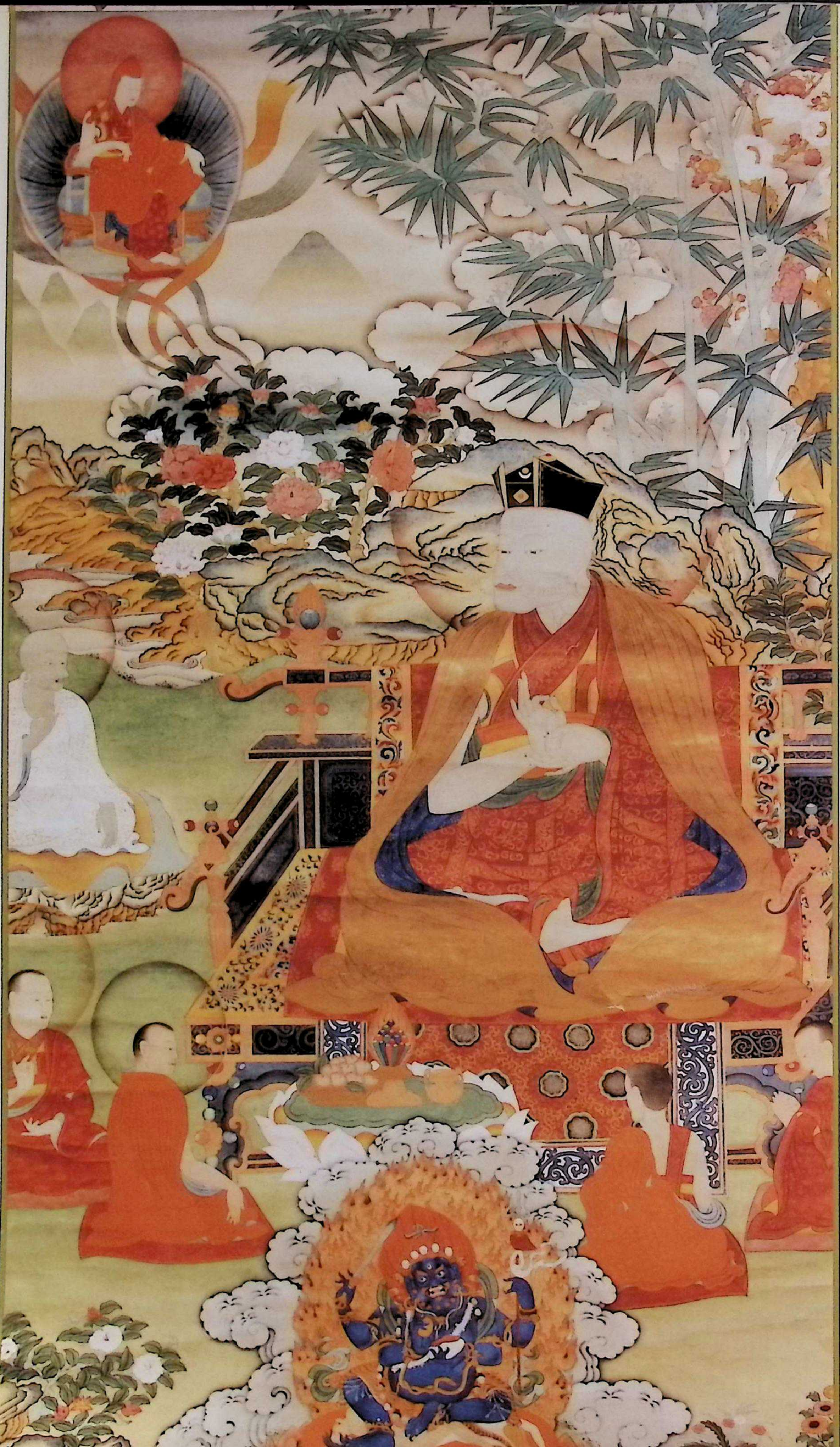
When Buddha Shakyamuni transmitted the teachings on the ultimate nature of mind in the *Samadhiraja Sutra*, he asked his assembled disciples which of them would vow to take rebirth in the future to serve as guardian of this precious wisdom. The *bodhisattva* Dawu Shunnu vowed to do so, and many years later took rebirth as the Lord Gampopa—who obtained full transmission from Milarepa and spread the teachings on *Mahamudra*, the essence of mind, throughout Tibet.

Gampopa was born in Nyal, in eastern Tibet. His father, a doctor, trained him, so the young Gampopa became a skilled physician, relieving the suffering of many people—yet during a severe epidemic he was unable to save his own beloved wife and children. Renouncing worldly life, he took the vows of a monk and devoted himself to studying the stages of the path as taught in the *sutras*, and cultivated the aspiration to benefit all beings impartially. Various signs presaging liberation arose in his dreams, and he would remain absorbed in an unwavering state of meditation for many days.

One day, Gampopa overheard three beggars discussing the miraculous qualities of Milarepa. When he heard the great yogi's name, Gampopa was overcome with devotion and fainted. When he awoke, he set out to find the great master, who at the time was staying in an isolated mountain retreat. Gampopa traveled like a man possessed, sometimes fainting from exhaustion and weakness. Finally, he reached the feet of Milarepa, who accepted him as a disciple.

Milarepa bestowed on him the essential instructions of the Kagyu lineage, including the Six Yogas of Naropa. He then sent Gampopa to meditate in a desolate cave, where various experiences of the path swiftly arose. On one occasion, he perceived his cave to be filled with deities. On another, he saw his body as a net of veins and bones, devoid of flesh. On yet another, the valley in which he sat practicing became filled with smoke, and he was forced to grope his way back into Milarepa's presence. Each time, Milarepa taught him not to cling to what appeared, saying "It's neither good nor bad. Keep practicing." Due to the high level of realization he had achieved in former lives and to his reliance on Milarepa, Gampopa progressed rapidly. At last, Milarepa transmitted to him all the precious teachings and empowerments, then sent him to central Tibet to develop his practice.

After meditating in hermitages and wild mountains for many years, Gampopa achieved enlightenment and clearly saw his teacher was Dorje Chang. As Milarepa had prophesied, local deities invited Gampopa to establish a monastery at Dagpo, where vast numbers of disciples gathered to receive the Kagyu teachings he expounded. During this period, Gampopa frequently displayed supernormal powers, often manifesting as Buddha Shakyamuni or the *bodhisattva* Chenrezig. Many people reported seeing him simultaneously presiding over a feast at one place, performing a consecration in another, and teaching in yet another. When at last he entered the realm of ultimate reality, the sky was filled with countless rainbows, images of white *stupas*, and a rain of flowers to mark the passage of a fully enlightened being.



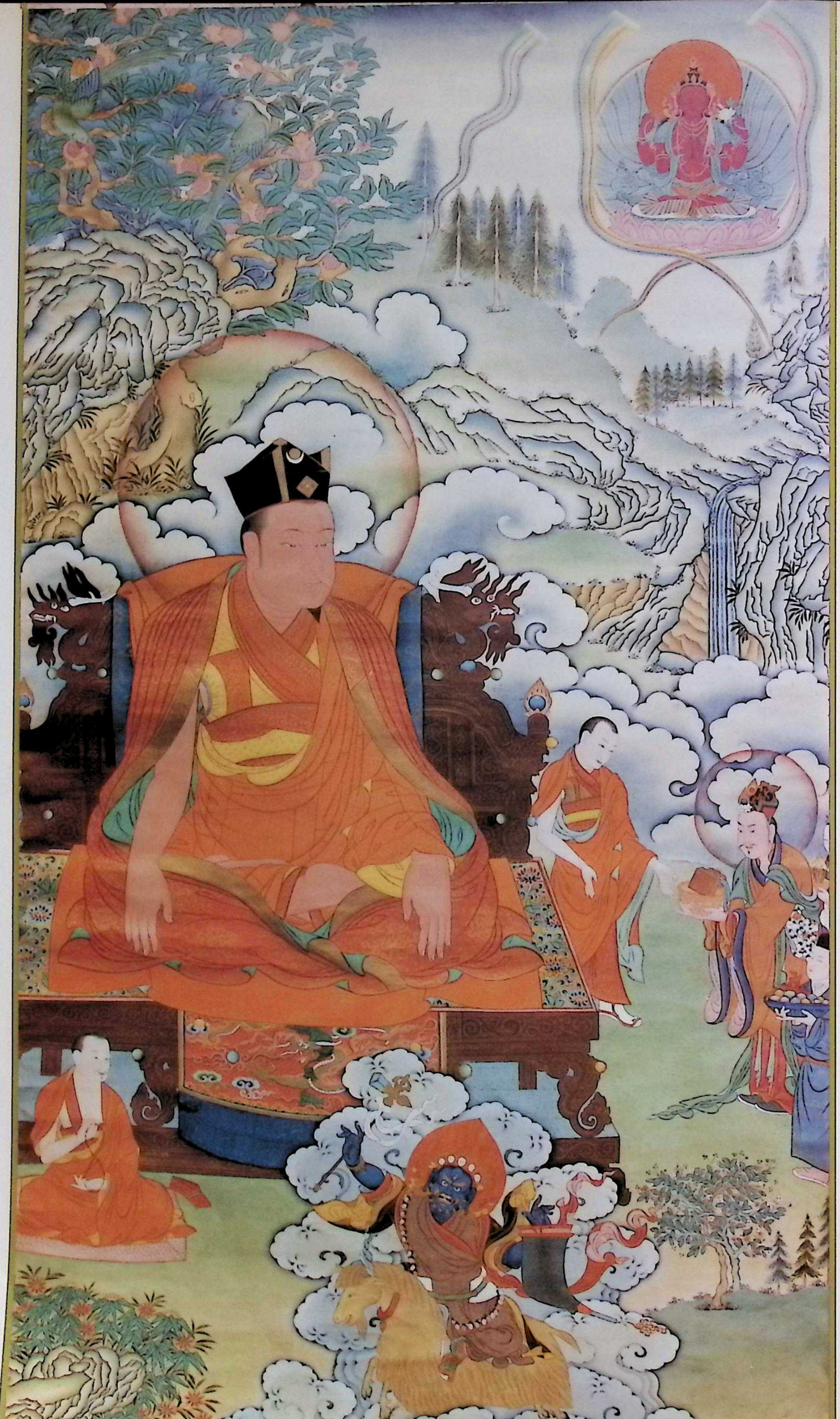
Dusum Khyenpa 1110: 1193

In the *Bhadrakalpa Sutra*, Buddha Shakyamuni prophesied that a thousand *buddhas* would manifest during the current *kalpa*, or universal cycle. He further predicted that the sixth of these fully enlightened beings, known as Drukpa Senge, would incarnate as a *bodhisattva* during the periods in which all the other *buddhas* were active, in order to help spread their teachings and free sentient beings from suffering.

Accordingly, Drukpa Senge took physical form as Dusum Khyenpa, born into a family of accomplished Buddhist practitioners in Treshu, in eastern Tibet. From his father, he received teachings on Mahakali, a wrathful feminine protector, and through their application he attained the ability to leave imprints of his hands and feet in solid rock. At the age of sixteen, he took ordination under the masters of the lineage of Lord Atisha, and disciplined the stream of his being through the rules of the *Vinaya*. He cultivated the vow of a *bodhisattva*, developing compassion and devotion to the benefit of all sentient beings. Through studying the teachings of Buddha Maitreya and the Indian master Nagarjuna, he established a firm foundation in philosophy and logic. From various meditation masters, he received the *Kalachakra* and other profound teachings on ultimate truth.

At the age of thirty, Dusum Khyenpa sought an audience with Gampopa, to whom he offered the following prayer: "Bless me that I may relinquish clinging to a self. Bless me that the condition where nothing is needed arises in my stream of being. Bless me that untrue concepts cease. Bless me that I may realize my mind to be unborn. Bless me that confusion will be pacified in its own place. Bless me that I may realize the world of appearance to be one with ultimate truth." In response, Gampopa bestowed upon him the transmission of the *Six Yogas of Naropa*. After four years of continual practice, Dusum Khyenpa realized the natural emptiness and radiance of his own mind, and immeasurable compassion toward all beings arose in his stream of being. After his meditation remained stable for six months, Gampopa told him he had completely severed the bonds of existence, and bestowed on him the essential transmissions of the Kagyu lineage.

Dusum Khyenpa practiced without regard for his body or his life in wild and desolate places, and gradually attained complete liberation. Having mastered the methods and meaning of the Kagyu transmission, he devoted his activity to the benefit of sentient beings. He established many monasteries, foremost among them Tsurphu Monastery, which has served as the principal seat of the Karmapas ever since. He gave teachings, and performed religious works in order to nurture the spiritual development of thousands of devoted disciples. He provided food and other material help to the hungry and needy, restored sight to the blind, cured sicknesses, and ended wars. All who met him were greatly benefitted. At the age of eighty-four, he entrusted to his foremost disciple, Drogon Rechen, a letter of prophecy describing the conditions under which he would next take birth. He thus became the first Tibetan *tulku*, known to take rebirth intentionally for the benefit of sentient beings. Though his body was cremated, his heart and tongue—representing his realization and pure speech—were recovered unburned from the ashes, and many divine symbols were found marked on his bones.



Karma Pakshi 1203: 1283

In accordance with the sacred prediction letter of the Lord Dusum Khyenpa, Karma Pakshi was born in Drilung to a family descended from the Dharma king Trisong Detsen. As a child, he effortlessly learned to read and write. By the age of ten, he had fixed the meaning of many Dharma texts clearly in his mind after only a single reading, so that he did not need to rely on many teachers. He was naturally able to rest his awareness on the essence of the mind, as if watching a vast, still ocean.

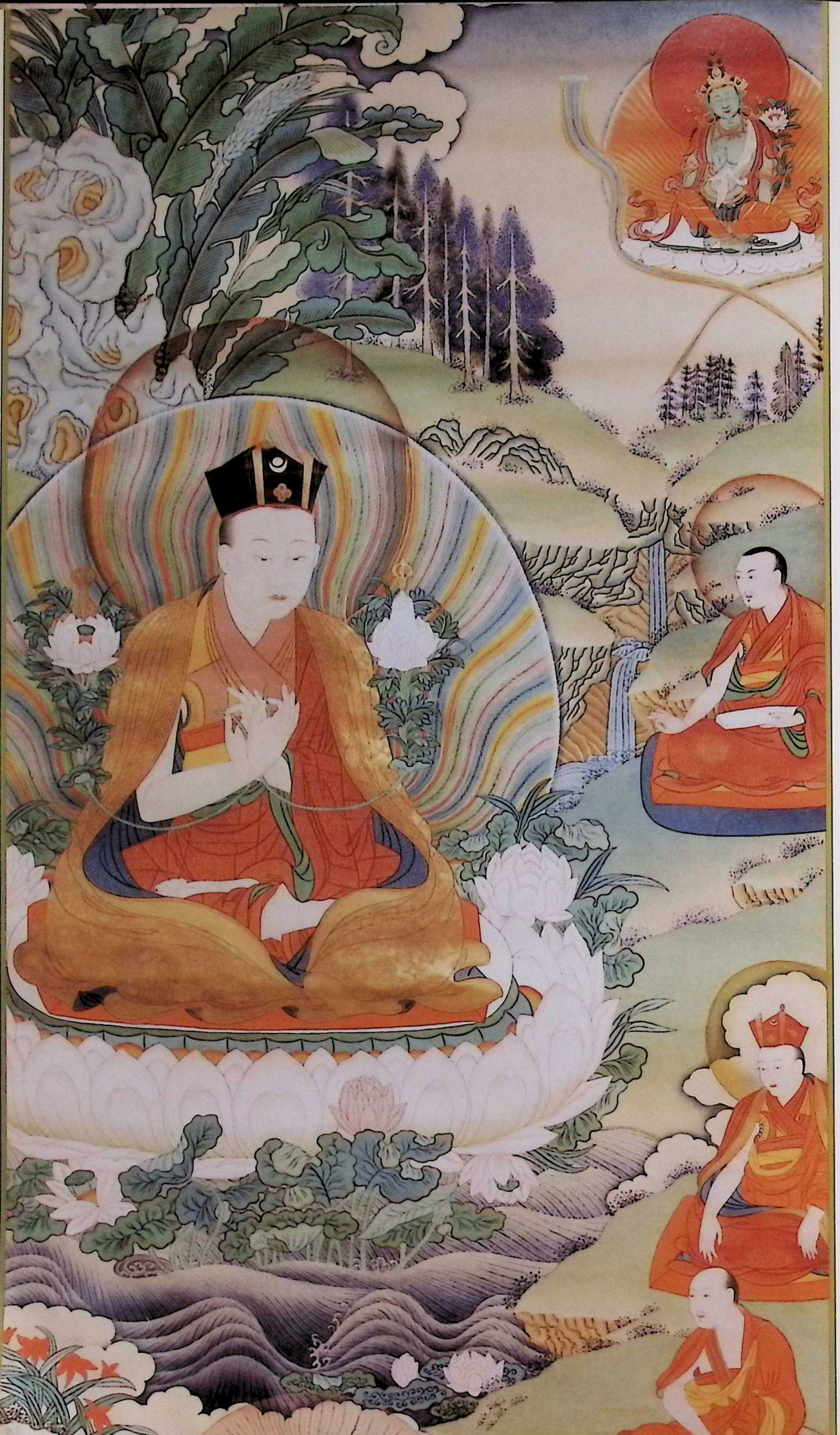
He received ordination at the age of eleven. The master Pomdrakpa bestowed the transmission of the Kagyu lineage upon him, declaring, "More wonderful than the offering of wealth filling the entire country is a great meditator who recognizes the nature of his own mind." For the next ten years, Karma Pakshi devoted himself to uninterrupted practice. He mastered the *four activities* and brought the powerful gods and spirits of Tibet into his service.

While residing at the main seat of the lineage at Tsurphu Monastery, Karma Pakshi was invited to China by the Mongol prince, Kublai Khan. Knowing such a visit would benefit many beings, he accepted. Over the course of three years, Karmapa proceeded toward China, helping religious communities and restoring monasteries along the way. When at last he arrived at Prince Kublai's court, he was received with lavish honors. Later, at the Imperial Court, Karma Pakshi bestowed the *Bodhisattva Vow* upon the emperor Mongka Khan and his retinue and granted them the transmission and teaching of Khorlo Dechog. Accompanied by the Emperor, he traveled extensively throughout China granting empowerments and teachings. Through the tremendous power of Karmapa's blessing, Mongka Khan perceived the true nature of his own mind and many non-Buddhists became followers of the Dharma.

Mongka Khan died soon after Karma Pakshi departed for Tibet. Kublai Khan, the new emperor, conceived a grudge against the Karmapa and sent soldiers to intercept him along the way. Karma Pakshi felt only sympathy for his captors, who were unable to harm him in any way. When the soldiers attempted to tie him up, their ropes simply passed through his body as if through a rainbow. When they threw him and two of his disciples into a blazing fire, water issued from their bodies to extinguish the flames. When thrown from a cliff, he floated down to the ground, and when cast into a lake, he glided effortlessly across the waters. When he was taken to a desolate place beside the ocean and left to die, he lived there contentedly without difficulty. At length, Kublai Khan requested Karmapa's forgiveness and became his disciple.

While in China, Karmapa was inspired to build a colossal statue of the Buddha at Tsurphu. He sent vast quantities of precious materials from China and appointed a craftsman to oversee the work. Upon returning to Tsurphu, Karma Pakshi discovered that the fifty-five foot statue, cast in a single piece, was leaning to one side. He meditated in front of the statue, inclining his body at the same angle. When he straightened his own posture, the statue also righted itself.

Karma Pakshi passed away at the age of eighty. His eyes, tongue, and heart were found unburned among his cremation ashes, along with rainbow-colored spirals, images of deities, and symbolic letters.



Rangjung Dorje 1284: 1339

The Lord of Dharma, Rangjung Dorje, passed through the *bardo* without any impairment of consciousness. Before entering his mother's womb, which he perceived in the form of a crystal palace, he received empowerment directly from Khorlo Dechog. Born just as the moon was rising, he immediately sat up and announced to his mother, "It is a waxing moon."

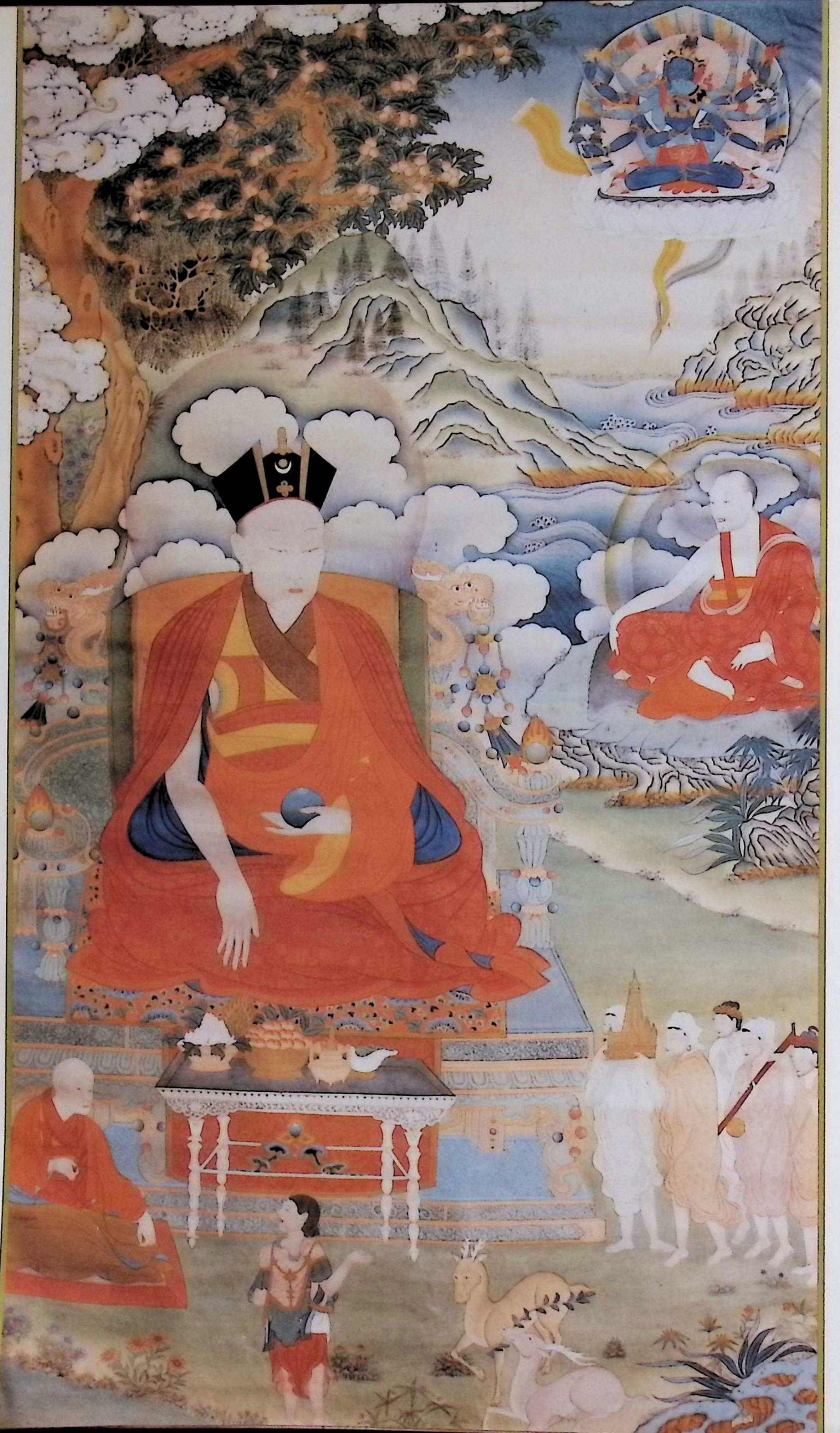
Rangjung Dorje was born in Tingri, western Tibet. His parents were practitioners of *Shijay*, the lineage of pacification transmitted by the great Indian master, Pa Dampa Sangye. At the age of five, his parents took him to meet Druptob Orgyenpa, to whom he had entrusted the Kagyu lineage during his previous incarnation. Rangjung Dorje climbed up and seated himself on the teacher's throne. "Child," Orgyenpa asked, "why do you sit on my lama's seat?" Karmapa replied, "I am the lama himself." He then came down and added, "Now it is your turn to be the teacher!" Afterwards, Orgyenpa bestowed upon him the transmissions of the lineage.

At the age of seven, Karmapa received ordination and was enthroned at Tsurphu Monastery. He was able to read and write without any instruction, and demonstrated full knowledge of the texts and subjects of the Buddha's teaching. Although the depth of his learning was unparalleled, he nevertheless attended the outstanding masters of each lineage according to custom, and received transmission and instruction from one hundred and thirteen different teachers. During his lifetime, he taught great masters such as Longchenpa of the Nyingma lineage and Yagde Panchen of the Sakya lineage.

Rangjung Dorje traveled throughout Tibet, teaching, writing, and building retreats and hermitages. He had countless visions in which deities and lamas of the past bestowed transmissions upon him. He also bound protectors and worldly deities to his service, so that wars ceased and the Dharma was able to spread throughout the country. While consecrating temples and organizing the printing of the scriptural canon, he directly perceived the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* of the ten directions assisting in the blessing. Through his realization of the relationship between inner experience and outer phenomena, he composed several treatises on *tantra* and astrology, which are the fundamental texts still used by the Kagyu lineage today.

Rangjung Dorje traveled twice to China at the invitation of the Emperor. During his first visit, Toghon Temur ascended the Imperial Throne and Karmapa presided over his coronation. During his second visit, he bestowed the empowerment of long life upon the Emperor and blessed him with long-life water consecrated by Lord Padmasambhava. As a result, Toghon Temur lived longer than any other Mongol emperor.

At the age of fifty-six, Karmapa perceived that he himself would soon pass away. He assured the Emperor that they would meet again during Karmapa's next incarnation. To his personal attendant, Rangjung Dorje gave the sacred letter predicting the circumstances of his future incarnation, and told him that the future Karmapa would also announce himself. After performing the ritual of Khorlo Dechog and granting his blessing to all present, Karmapa left his material body. That night, the palace guards clearly saw his face gazing down on them from the disc of the moon. They woke the Emperor and his court so they could witness the miracle, which was afterwards memorialized in carvings at the Imperial Court.



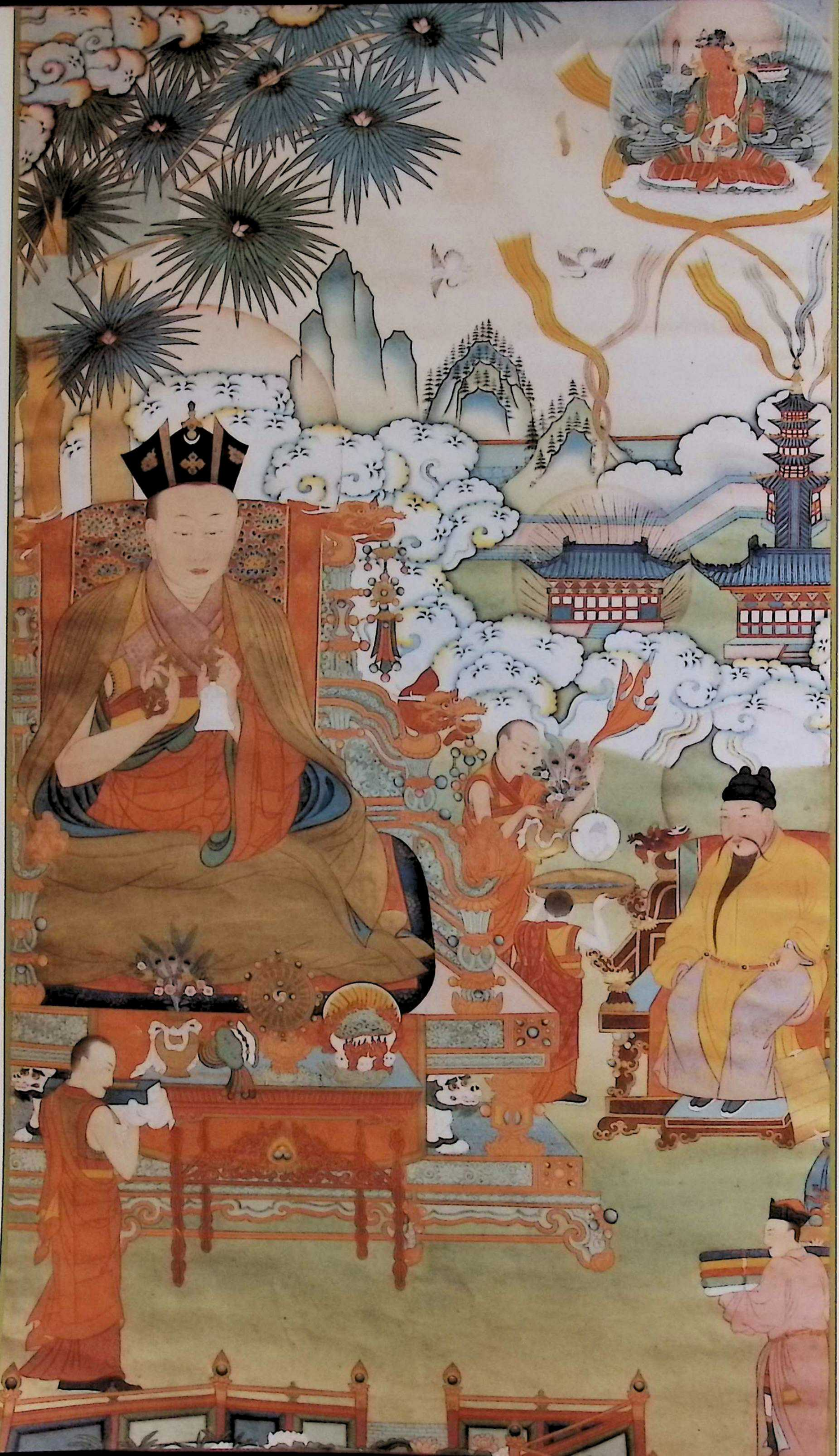
Rolpe Dorje 1340: 1383

The Fourth Karmapa, Rolpe Dorje, took birth in the Kongpo region of Tibet, in accordance with the sacred prediction letter written in his former life. His mother was a manifestation of a *wisdom dakini*, and Rolpe Dorje transformed her womb into a comfortable palace in which he recited *mantras* audible to those nearby. He also practiced yogic exercises, which from time to time shook his mother's body. At his birth, a sweet fragrance emanated from his body, and he sat up immediately, reciting *Om Mani Pemay Hung*. Though his father was alarmed, his mother assured him that she'd had many dreams indicating that their son was very special. At the age of three, Karmapa told his mother that he was Karma Pakshi, and that he had taken birth for the sake of his many disciples in this world. His parents therefore took him to Lhasa. Large numbers of people came to meet him along the way, and he greeted them each, saying, "You are so-and-so, and your home is arranged thus. You gave me such-and-such an offering in the past." Each was overwhelmed by devotion and requested his blessing, which he gladly bestowed.

Rolpe Dorje took novice ordination at the age of six, and full ordination at eighteen, observing every detail of the rules of conduct with the utmost scrupulousness. Neither a hair's tip of meat nor a breath of alcohol was ever permitted in his presence. Although he retained profound wisdom from his previous lifetimes concerning all aspects of the Dharma, he accepted the vast and profound transmissions of each lineage in order to demonstrate the relationship between master and disciple. While receiving the transmissions of deities, he directly perceived their divine presence.

Rolpe Dorje was invited to the Chinese Imperial Court, and knowing that a visit would benefit many beings, he agreed to go. When he arrived, famine, epidemics, and rebellion engulfed the country. Rolpe Dorje restored peace by pacifying local gods, and through the blessings of the Medicine Buddha and the Deity of Wealth, he gradually restored health and prosperity to the land. The Emperor and his children, through their deep faith, were able to receive and understand the profound oral transmissions he bestowed upon them. Many officials from China, Mongolia, Korea, and other regions gave rise to the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings, and received the *Bodhisattva Vow* from Karmapa. Although China grew prosperous and contented, Rolpe Dorje foresaw the end of the dynasty and insisted upon returning to Tibet. He visited many regions along the way, teaching extensively and giving whatever offerings he received to support the Dharma. During his travels, he bestowed novice ordination upon the young Tsongkhapa, who later founded the Gelugpa school.

At the end of his life, Rolpe Dorje traveled to a high, solitary mountain in the far north of Tibet. He instructed his monks to bring along a large amount of juniper wood, explaining that there would be no wood suitable for a funeral pyre where they were going. When they reached the mountain, he told his followers that if a pure monk were cremated on the summit, foreign armies threatening Tibet at the time would be unable to invade. His disciples did not understand that he meant to pass away, however, until his health suddenly declined. He entered *parinirvana* soon afterwards, and when his body was cremated a rain of divine flowers fell from the sky and the earth trembled six times. Many people saw his image in the sky, encircled by a rainbow.



Deshin Shekpa 1384: 1415

The great Fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa, has been praised thus: "You are the Ocean of Supreme Intention, laden with jewels of Omniscient Wisdom. The profound depths of your compassion transcend conceptual limit. Continuous waves of your activity stream in the ten directions. To the Lama, the Ocean of Knowledge, I bow down."

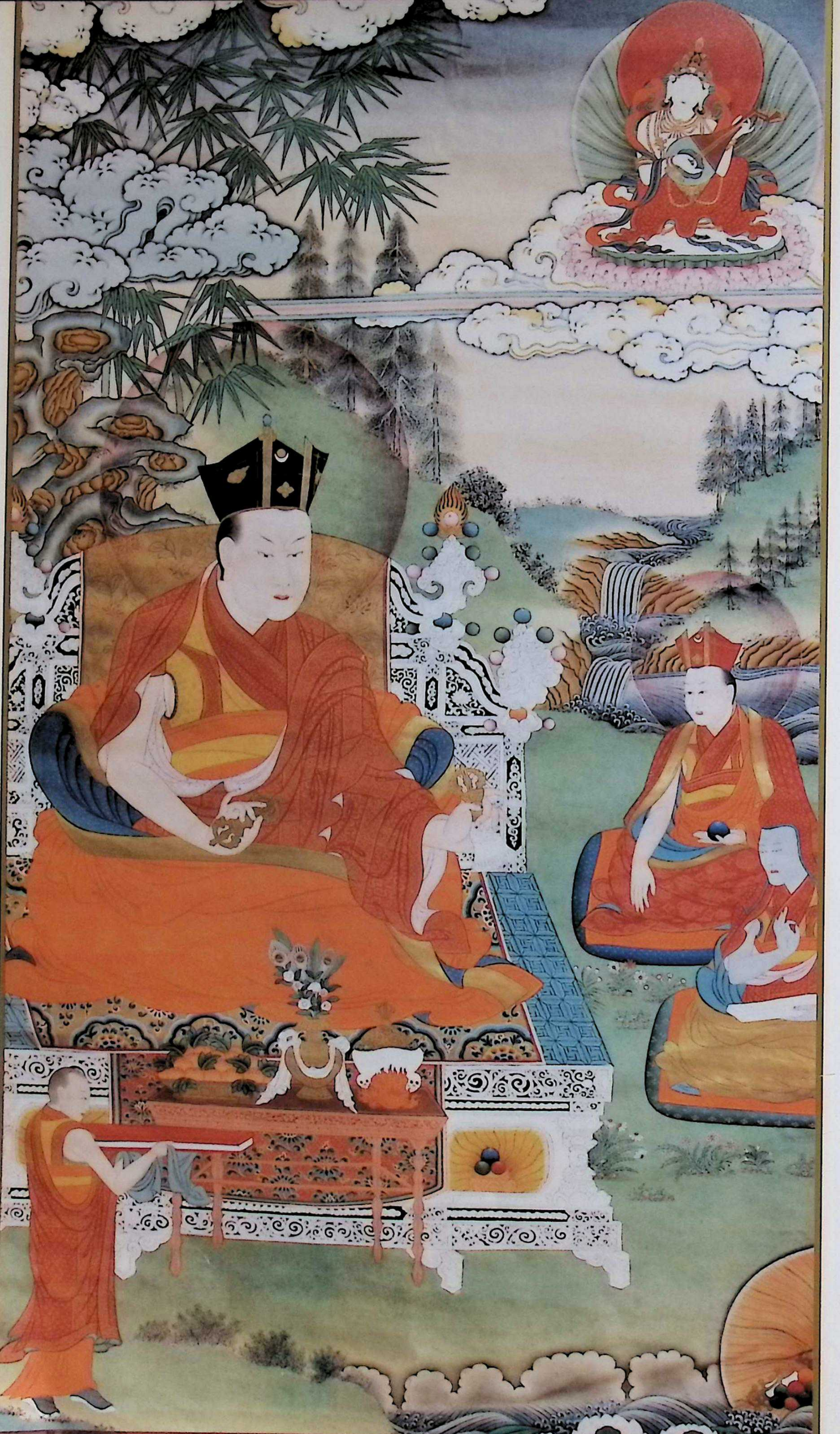
In accordance with the prediction of Rolpe Dorje, Deshin Shekpa was born in Nyangdam, in southern Tibet. His father and mother were advanced *tantric* practitioners, and from his mother's womb he was heard reciting *Om Mani Pemay Hung*. So many magnificent omens arose during his mother's pregnancy that people gathered in great numbers as soon as he was born in order to make offerings, prayers, and prostrations to him. By the time he was two months old, he had demonstrated beyond question that he was indeed the Karmapa.

Through his mastery of the ten *paramitas*, Karmapa won the devotion and respect of all who met him. He obtained mastery of phenomena through mastering his own mind, and understood precisely how to benefit and mature the stream of being of everyone he met. Buddha Shakyamuni, Manjushri, Maitreya, Chenrezig, the Sixteen *Arhats*, and the goddess Tara visited him repeatedly to bestow blessings and prophecies. Hosts of protectors and guardian deities scrupulously accomplished his activity without requiring any instruction or command.

Yung Lo, the Ming emperor, invited Deshin Shekpa to the Chinese Imperial Court, where he was received by ten thousand monks. He bestowed many *Vajrayana* transmissions upon the Emperor and his retinue, who through their devotion achieved excellent results in meditation and practice. The Emperor, in particular, perceived the mystic black crown of Chenrezig that rests above the heads of all the Karmapa incarnations. So that others with less ability might receive its blessing, Yung Lo obtained Karmapa's permission to construct a replica of silk, gold, and jewels. He then offered the crown to Deshin Shekpa, who consecrated it with the divine original. The material crown has been passed down to all subsequent Karmapas, and is displayed in a ceremony conferring Chenrezig's blessing.

Deshin Shekpa meanwhile manifested limitless miracles in the vicinity of the Imperial Court. Rainbows, multicolored clouds, visions of flying saints, gods, and goddesses, and mysteriously glowing lights appeared to all who lived in the Imperial City. The Emperor commanded court artists to paint these visions on a silk scroll, which he then offered to the Karmapa.

Upon his return to Tibet, Deshin Shekpa appeared to grow ill. Though ceremonies were undertaken to prolong his life, he told his students that he had already arranged the conditions for his rebirth in the vicinity of Karma Monastery in eastern Tibet. He then passed away, and images of deities and many other rainbow-colored relics were recovered from the ashes after his cremation.



Thongwa Donden 1416: 1453

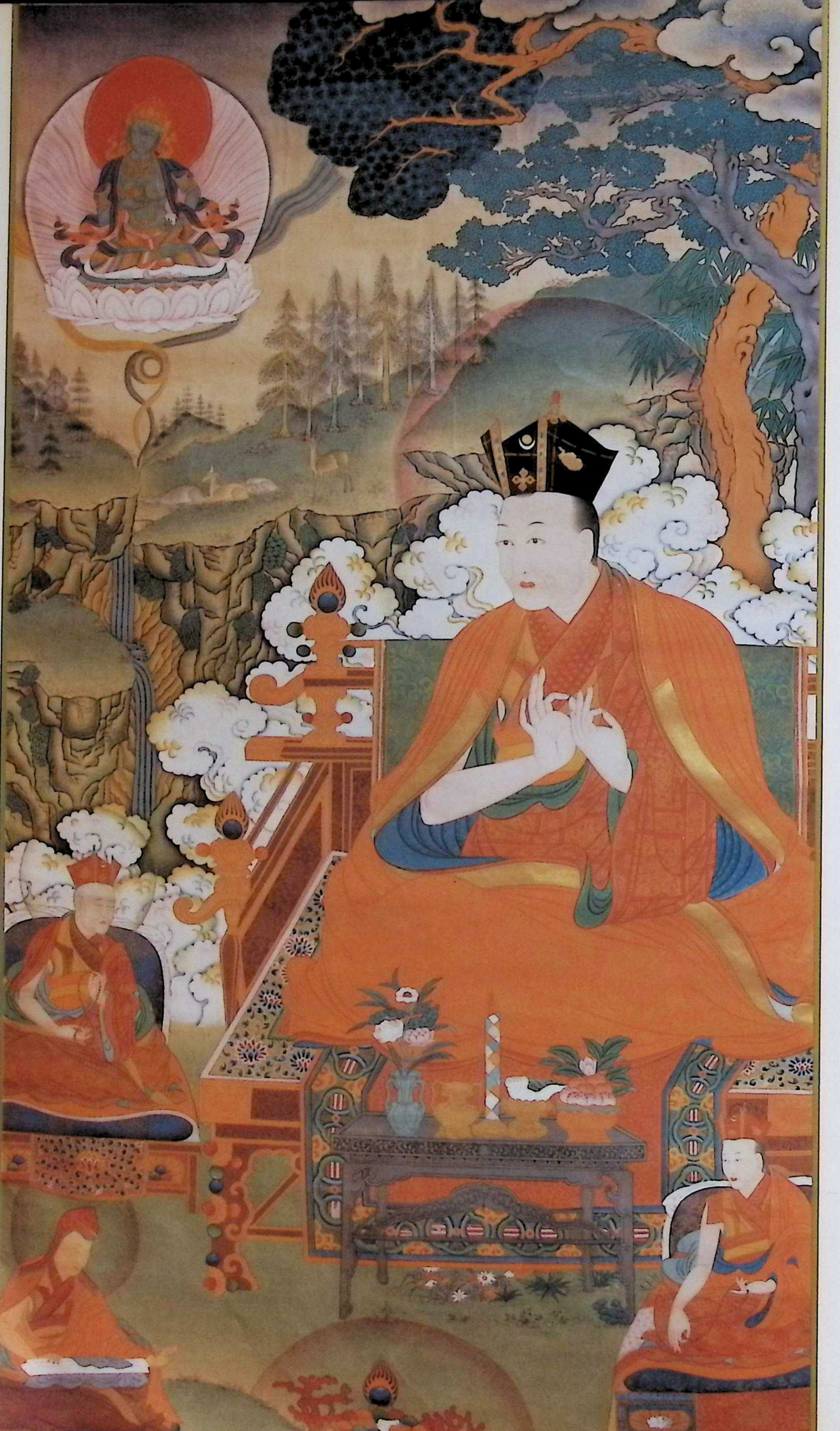
Thongwa Donden was born in Ngom, in eastern Tibet, near Karma Monastery. Immediately after his birth, he sat up and began to laugh. Celestial fragrance permeated the countryside when his umbilical cord was cut. As an infant, he accompanied his parents to the home of the previous Karmapa's disciple, Lama Ngompa Jadralwa. He became very excited upon seeing Jadralwa's face, and when the lama asked him "Who are you?" Thongwa Donden replied, "I am unborn and ineffable. I am nonabiding. I have come as the glory of all who are born, to guide to liberation all those who wander without abode in the cycle of rebirth, leaving no one behind."

When Thongwa Donden was four months old, a rumor arose that Lama Jadralwa had been killed while traveling. Though many were devastated by the news, Thongwa Donden danced with joy and assured his mother that Jadralwa had not been harmed. Jadralwa indeed returned safely, and again asked the child, "Who are you?" Thongwa Donden replied, "I am the incarnation of Deshin Shekpa, don't you know?"

In time, Thongwa Donden was taken to Karma Monastery and shown images of previous Karmapas. When asked, "Who is that?" he replied, laughing, "That is me!" When shown the Karmapa's black crown, he declared, "It is mine!" and took it in his hands. When an attendant brought tea, the child called him by the name the former Karmapa had used. Thongwa Donden also identified all the images in the various temples, convincing those who witnessed the event that he really was the Karmapa. For three days, local residents saw flowers rain from the sky, and it was proclaimed thereafter that Thongwa Donden was the Lord of Dharma himself.

Other miracles followed. Karmapa ended a smallpox epidemic by conferring blessings, and relieved a drought simply by playing with water. After he consecrated a religious painting with barley, seven grains remained floating in the air. When a former disciple named Lama Kunpangpa, asked him, "Please give a gift to one whom you have held near to your heart," Thongwa Donden called him affectionately by the name he had used in his previous life, and gave him a present. The lama's face flowed with tears.

Thongwa Donden took novice ordination at the age of nine. He received the *Bodhisattva Vow* and the transmissions of the various lineages, which he cultivated for many years in retreat. At the time, many of the liturgies of the Kagyu lineage were fragmentary, drawn from source *tantras* and Indian texts. Oral instructions were required to explain different stages of practice. Karmapa organized the liturgy and wrote many of the standard versions still used today. He also traveled throughout Tibet restoring monasteries, mediating disputes, and teaching the Dharma. All who saw him received his blessing, which transformed their lives. At the age of thirty-eight, Thongwa Donden suddenly grew ill, and after carefully packing and sealing his books and shrine objects, commanded his disciples not to break the seals until he returned. After his passing, his body was cremated and many beautiful relics were found in the ashes.



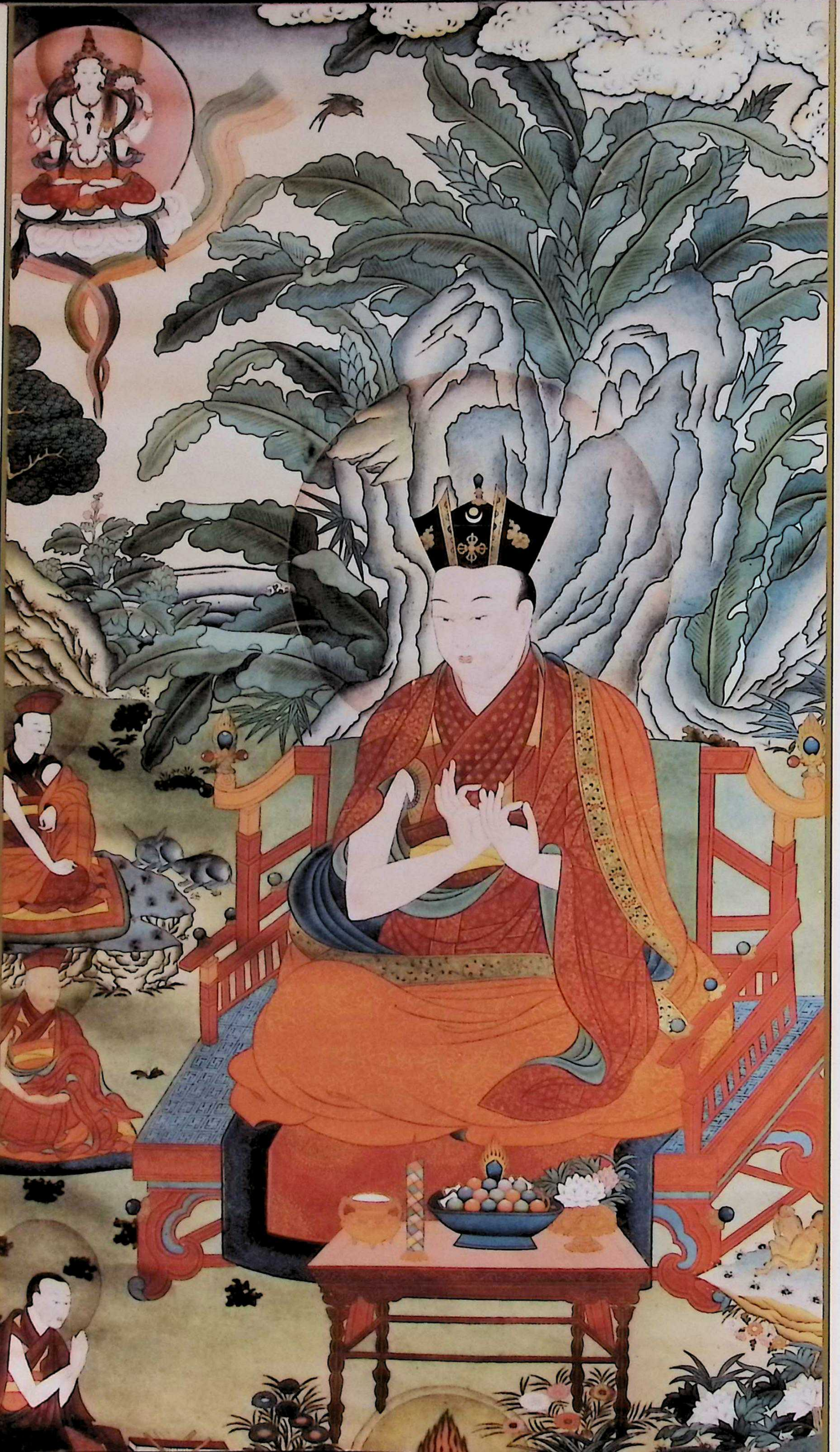
Chödrak Gyatso 1454: 1505

Heavenly flowers rained down, peals of thunder rolled through the valley, and five-colored lights filled the sky when the Seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyatso, was born at Chi Lha in northern Tibet. As soon as he was born, the child uttered "Ah la la!" in delight, and laughed. His body was marked with many auspicious symbols: *Dharma wheels* marked the soles of his feet, the letter *Ah* appeared above his heart, and the shapes of flowers manifested in many places on his body. At the age of seven days, he began to speak and to understand the *mantras* his parents and others recited. Gods and men naturally gravitated to his birthplace, so that there was no way to keep his identity secret. As soon as his parents announced his birth, his fame spread like summer thunder. At the age of nine months, Karmapa met the first Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, and it is said that there was not one teaching of the Lord Buddha in Tibet that he did not hear from his masters.

From an early age, Chödrak Gyatso manifested extraordinary qualities. At the age of three months, he announced, "I possess the name of 'Karma.' One born like me is rare. All those who hold a connection to me are the object of my unchanging aspiration." At five months he said, "The magical display of bliss and emptiness, the multifaceted play of fundamental awareness, is seen by the immature as if it were real. I am free of birth, cessation, and abiding." While conducting an empowerment at the age of five, he threw a heavy string of jewels into the *mandala* of Khorlo Dechog. The necklace landed softly in the very center of the *mandala* without disturbing the flowers arranged there. During a serious drought, he proclaimed, "By virtue of the truth of the *Three Jewels* may rain fall this moment!" Immediately, a heavy rain began to fall, a miraculous display that confirmed many people's faith in the power of the Three Jewels.

Chödrak Gyatso became a renowned exponent of the tradition of *tsema*, the Tibetan system of formal logic. He composed many texts, including profound commentaries clarifying the views expounded by great masters of logic such as Dignaga and Dharmakirti. He also established several important monastic colleges and attracted disciples from China, India, Nepal, and Mongolia, as well as numerous kingdoms in and around Tibet. While traveling through eastern Tibet with his monastic community, Karmapa saw visions of Guru Rinpoche and Buddha Shakyamuni surrounded by many deities and lamas. They showed him the locations of secret valleys where practitioners of his lineage would find shelter from the sectarian tensions threatening Tibet during his lifetime.

Chödrak Gyatso passed away at the age of fifty-two. His ribs and spine were recovered intact from the ashes of his cremation fire, transformed into a pearl-like material. On the eleven bones of his neck appeared eleven faces in relief, consistent with the eleven-faced, thousand-armed form of the *bodhisattva* Chenrezig. Open hands with an open eye in the center of each appeared distinctly on his ribs.



Mikyö Dorje 1507: 1554

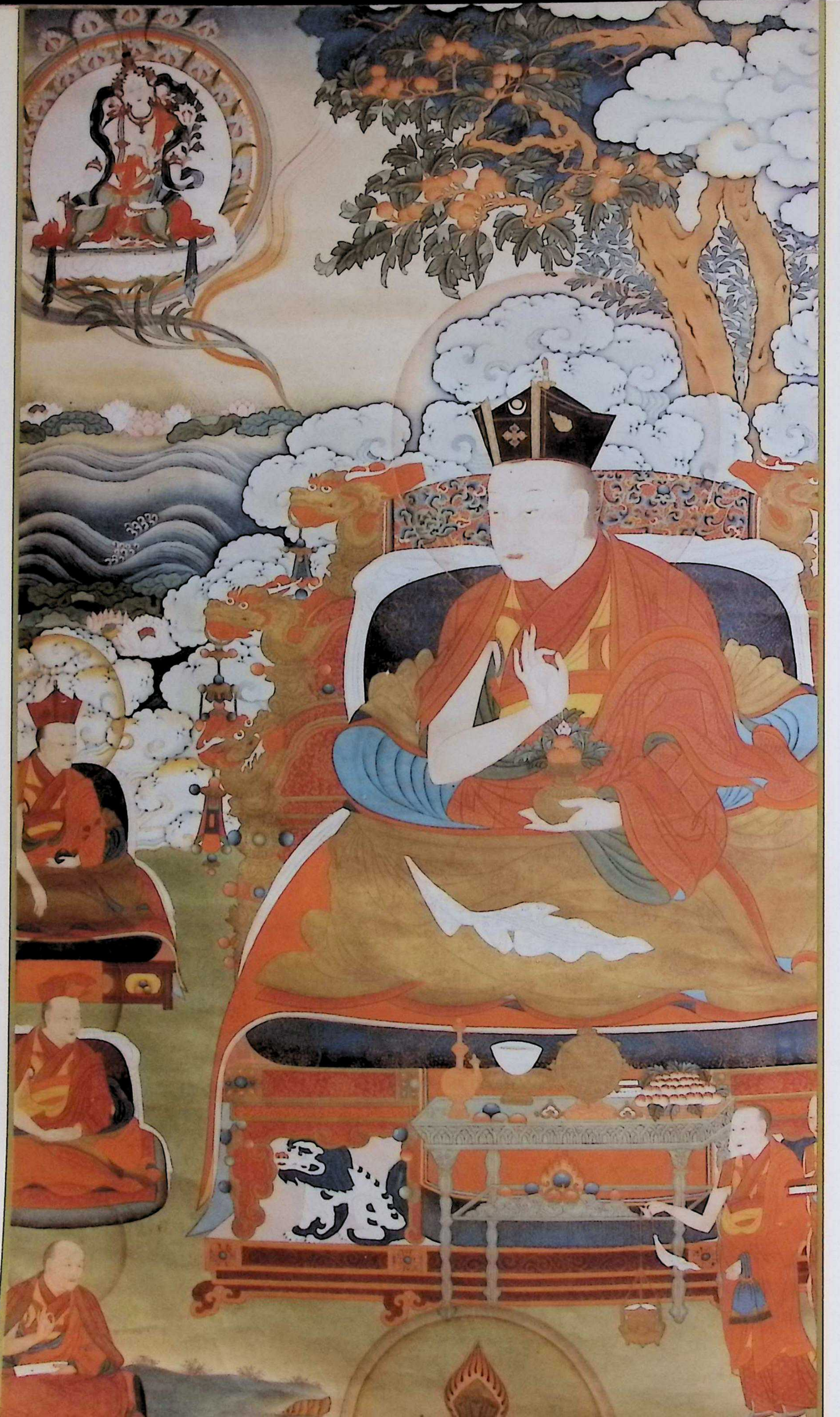
Amidst many auspicious signs, Karmapa Mikyö Dorje was born in Damchu, in eastern Tibet. The gods proclaimed his birth in the ten directions, and word spread rapidly throughout Tibet that the Karmapa's reincarnation had appeared. After nine days, the Third Tai Situ Rinpoche, Gyalsay Tashi Paljor, came to see the child. The sacred prediction letter of the previous Karmapa had described a house with juniper trees in back, the front door facing east, and a stream flowing eastward nearby, and stated that the names of his parents would be "Jampa" and "Lamatso." Tai Situ Rinpoche found that the physical details of Mikyö Dorje's birthplace and the names of his parents closely matched the details of the sacred prediction letter.

Tai Situpa told Mikyö Dorje's parents to keep his identity secret for three months, in order to create the auspicious conditions for his long-life. He gave them a gift of tea, incense, and blessing medicine, saying, "Serve the child buttered tea and offer incense before him, saying it is a gift from Tai Situ Rinpoche. Then give him the blessing medicine and send me word if he speaks." When the parents did so, Mikyö Dorje exclaimed, "Emaho! Do not doubt me, I am Karmapa!" Soon afterwards, Tai Situ Rinpoche brought him to Karma Monastery. Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche offered Mikyö Dorje a ritual bell and hand drum, which the infant played perfectly according to ritual.

At the age of nine, Karmapa took novice vows, and concentrated on study and meditation. Deities bestowed transmission and prophecies upon him in visions, and he performed miracles such as leaving the impressions of his feet and hands in stone. He became a great artist, whose paintings of deities strongly influenced religious painting throughout Tibet. He once carved a beautiful marble image of himself, and when it was finished he asked, "Are you a good likeness of me?" The statue replied, "Yes, of course!" Mikyö Dorje then took a lump of stone left over from the work and squeezed it like dough, impressing the stone with the shape of his fingers.

In his teachings, Mikyö Dorje emphasized the view that the essence of all things is beyond mere nothingness, which can only be recognized through direct realization devoid of concepts or dualistic fixation. He taught that all appearances are nothing more than interdependent, relative manifestation. This view, known as *Shentong* ("Empty of Other"), has become the primary approach for followers of the Kagyu lineage. Through his mastery of logic and philosophy, Mikyö Dorje composed commentaries that make this view accessible to scholars.

Karmapa spent much of his life traveling from region to region, wherever monasteries and students appealed to him for guidance and transmission. His traveling camp, called *Karmay Garchen*, The Great Camp of the Karmapa, consisted of a large monastic congregation carrying all the religious facilities required for many months on the road. Karmapa's monks assembled for their daily ceremonies in huge shrine tents equipped with ceremonial necessities. In this way, Mikyö Dorje propagated the Dharma and blessed thousands of people throughout the kingdoms of Tibet and its neighboring regions.



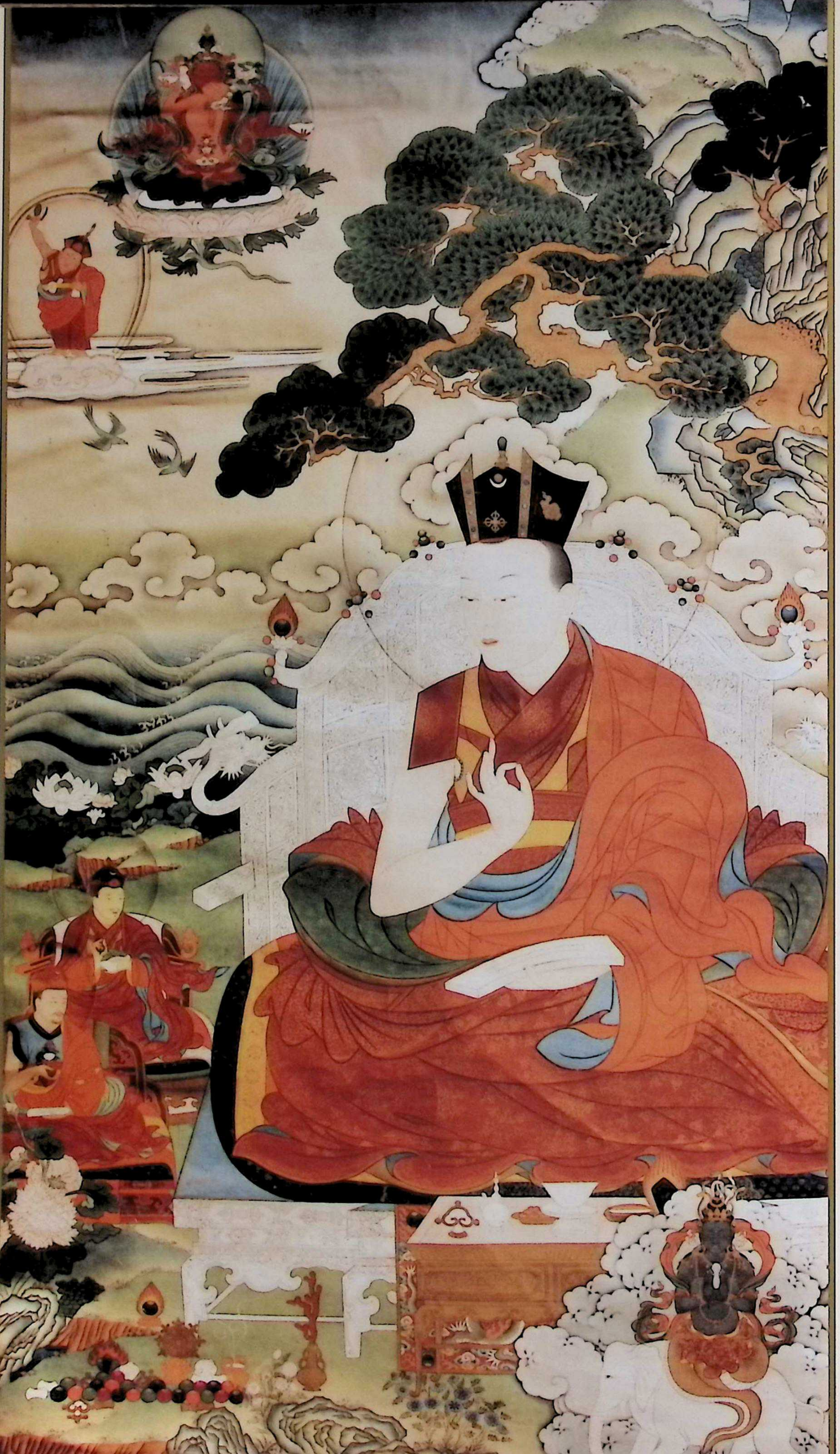
Wangchuk Dorje 1555: 1603

The prediction letter of Mikyö Dorje proclaimed, *As the play of my manifestation following this life, high on the face of the wall of snow mountains, at the stronghold of Tre, near where the Glorious Lord of the World spontaneously appeared, there is a place suitable for practice of profound religion, where the sound of a river is heard. Not far from that place, the signs of my taking birth will manifest.* In accord with this prophecy, Wangchuk Dorje took birth at Treshod, in the highlands of eastern Tibet. His family home stood very close to the site where an image of the *bodhisattva* Chenrezig had miraculously appeared in the rock. As soon as he was born, Wangchuk Dorje said, "I am the Karmapa!" and sat up in meditation posture, which he maintained for three days. When his father began to prostrate towards him, he laughed and stood up, saying the *mantra*, "Om Ah Hung" and reciting the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. Within eighteen days, he was walking about freely, and his fame spread spontaneously throughout the region.

Wangchuk Dorje was ordained in the elaborate ritual known as the "hair-cutting ceremony" and formally enthroned at Tsurphu Monastery at the age of six. He accomplished much of his studies while traveling with his masters in their monastic camp, *Karmay Garchen*, which moved from region to region helping the local populace and monasteries. Since a very strict routine of practice and discipline was followed, only very serious, dedicated practitioners were accepted into the camp. Scholarship focused on the *Hevajra* and *Dechog tantras*, the *Five Teachings of the Lord Maitreya*, and other essential teachings. Meditation practices emphasized the *Mahamudra*, the *Six Yogas of Naropa*, *Chö*, and the *mandalas* of the *tantric* deities, particularly those of Vajravarahi, Chenrezig, and Hayagriva.

Throughout his life, Wangchuk Dorje was asked to mediate political disputes in central Tibet. Knowing the early kings had established Buddhism as the guiding principle of Tibetan life, he made efforts to restore the temples they had established and invoked their virtuous example to inspire his contemporaries. He restored many Kagyu monasteries and retreat centers throughout Tibet, and expounded the writings of the previous Karmapas. He also spread the Buddhist teachings in Bhutan and Mongolia. Though unable to personally visit Sikkim, he sent a senior lama who established three monasteries there: Potong, Ralung, and Rumtek.

During the course of his travels throughout Tibet, Karmapa identified the young reincarnations of the senior Kagyu lamas who had been his teachers and had overseen the monastic centers of the lineage. Not only did he enthrone these incarnations, he also raised and taught them with the same care as a mother looking after her own child. This profound method of preserving the teaching—through which master and disciples take birth again and again, each nurturing the other in his childhood—is succinctly captured by the Tibetan phrase *Kagyu Gyalwa Yabse*: Glorious Father and Sons of the Kagyu lineage.



Chöying Dorje 1604: 1674

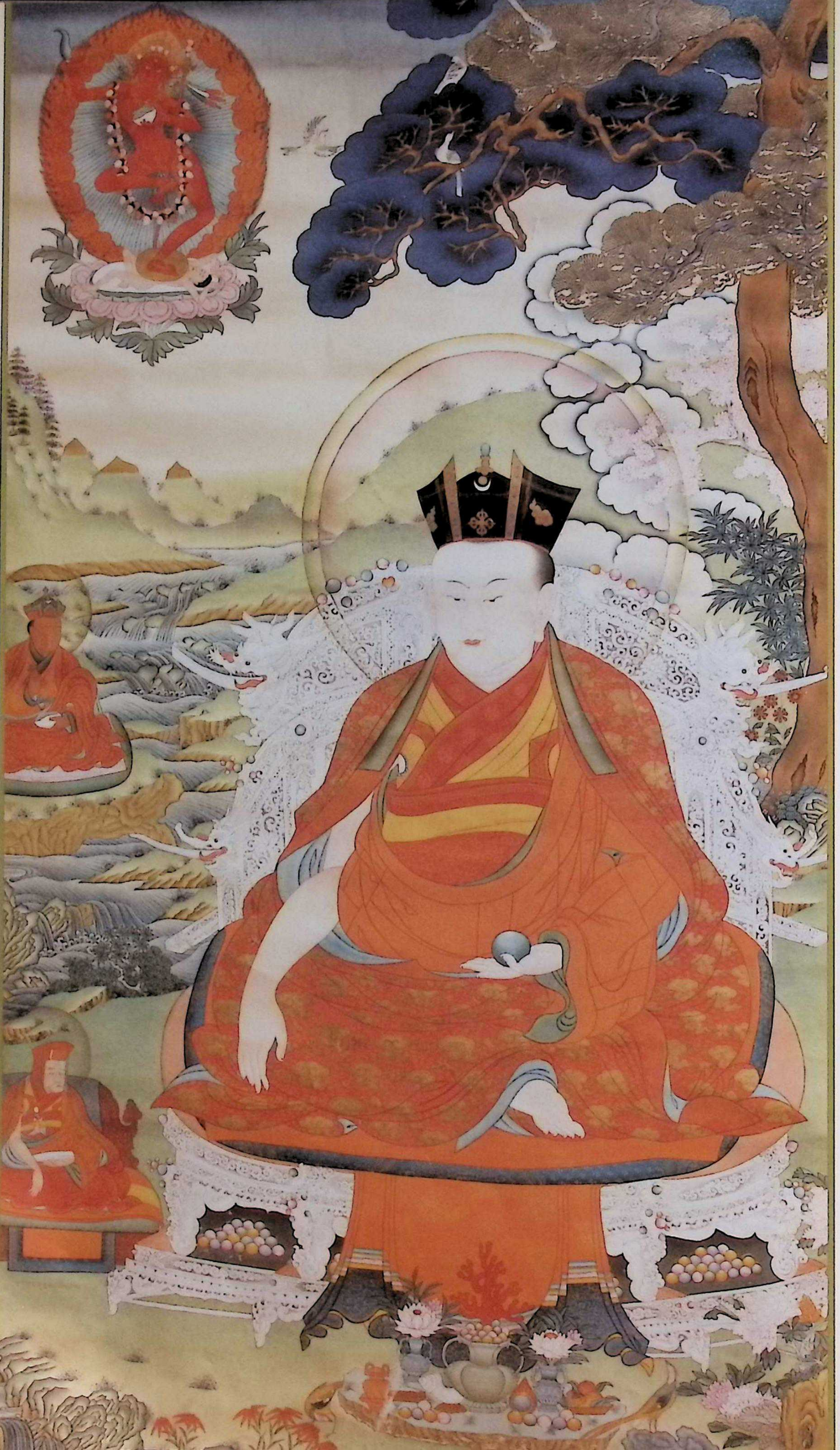
The Tenth Karmapa, Chöying Dorje, was born in Golok, in northeastern Tibet. Upon hearing wonderful accounts of Chöying Dorje's birth and qualities, the local ruler invited the family to his palace and accepted the child into his household. Raised and educated in the palace for six years, Chöying Dorje demonstrated innumerable skills and qualities, manifesting particular brilliance in the areas of art and poetry. At the age of eight, he was recognized and enthroned as the Tenth Karmapa, and in a formal debate with his peers, he clarified misunderstandings surrounding Buddhist philosophy and the practice of *Bodhicitta*.

While walking near a river one day, Chöying Dorje stopped before a white boulder half-immersed in the water. He told the monks attending him to pull the boulder from the water and split it open. The monks moved the rock with great difficulty, and when they broke it open they found innumerable insect-like sentient beings sealed inside in a state of intense agony. Karmapa described their condition as an aspect of hell, and blessed them, praying for their rebirth in a better existence. With that, they became still and died.

Karmapa studied intensively for several years at Tsurphu Monastery. During this time, the king of the southern province of Tsang became his devoted patron. The King's son later extended his authority throughout Tibet and became embroiled in a dispute with two large monasteries near Lhasa. The Lhasa monks enlisted the support of Mongol chiefs, and during the war that followed, they took the opportunity to suppress other schools of Buddhism. Soldiers surrounded Karmapa's tent encampment, intending to capture him. Though Karmapa remained fearlessly inside the camp, the soldiers couldn't see him. They began to fight amongst themselves, some motivated by faith in the Karmapa, and others by anger. At last, Karmapa showed himself in their midst, appearing to some in his own form, and to others as a deer or an eagle. With his attendant, Kuntuzangpo, he flew into the sky, leaving the soldiers behind.

Karmapa and Kuntuzangpo alighted in northern Bhutan. For twelve days they had no food, but Lord Padmasambhava himself fed them nectar. Nourished by wild animals and protected by local spirits, they lived in the wilderness for three years. Eventually, they came to the kingdom of Jyang in the Yunnan region of China, whose inhabitants greeted Karmapa with great joy. The King of Jyang conceived a plan to drive the Mongolian forces from Tibet and establish Karmapa as Tibet's head of state. Karmapa dissuaded him, however, explaining that war ran counter to the Buddha's teaching and would cause only harm. For the next thirty years, Karmapa lived in Jyang, teaching and building temples. During this period, the incarnations of the major teachers of the Kagyu lineage took rebirth in various parts of eastern Tibet. Disguised as a beggar to avoid danger, Karmapa journeyed repeatedly to Tibet to find these incarnations and arrange for their enthronement and training.

At the age of fifty-eight, Karmapa returned publicly to Tibet with his disciples, visiting different kingdoms to teach the Dharma, ordain monks, and build temples. Near the end of his life, he visited Lhasa, where he met with the Dalai Lama and bestowed upon him teachings of the *Mahamudra*. Afterwards, the Dalai Lama made a proclamation to protect Tsurphu Monastery from political disturbances in the future. Karmapa passed away at Tsurphu at the age of seventy-one.



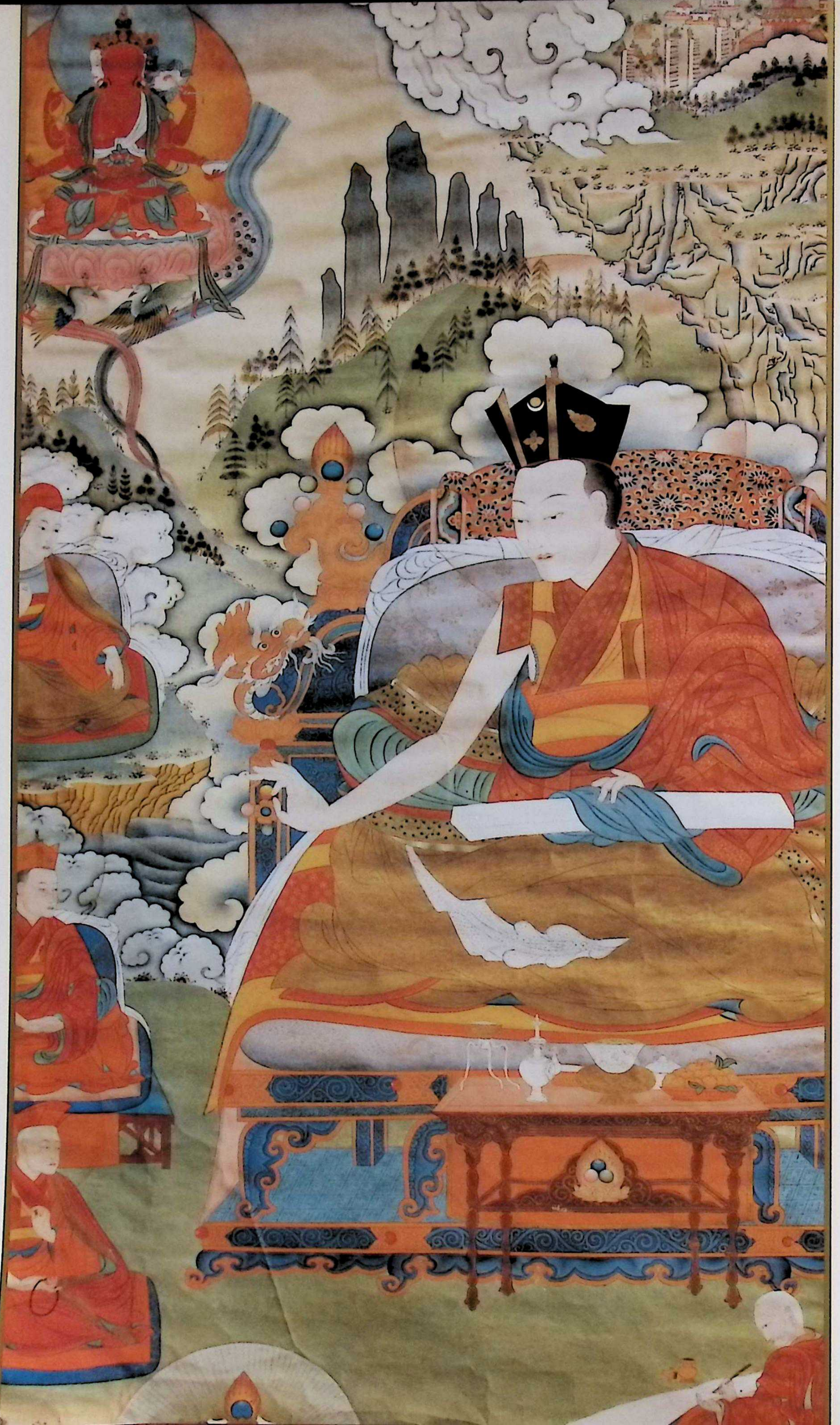
Yeshe Dorje 1676: 1702

Through the power of great compassion for all beings suffering in this degenerate time, Yeshe Dorje took rebirth when the transmission of the teachings on ultimate liberation had been suppressed and diminished. Rainbow-colored lights filled the sky to announce his birth into a noble family in Meshuk, in eastern Tibet. The young Karmapa inspired the people around him with detailed accounts of visions of deities and by demonstrating knowledge of past, present, and future events. His numerous accomplishments led the great *tertön*, Migyur Dorje, to proclaim, "The Dharma Lord of humans and nonhumans alike, Karmapa, the Supreme Emanation, has been born!" The proclamation spread in all directions, and the preeminent lamas of the Kagyu lineage compared the prediction letter written by Chöying Dorje with the circumstances of the child's birth. After finding every point in agreement, they escorted Yeshe Dorje to Tsurphu Monastery.

Throughout his long journey, Yeshe Dorje bestowed blessings on the crowds of lamas, disciples, and people of valley and steppe who thronged the route to catch sight of him. Upon his arrival at Tsurphu, he ascended the Great Lion Throne, and donned the bejeweled, azure-blue, *vajra* crown of the Great Lord of the Doctrine of the Lineage of the Essential Meaning. The community of monks then performed elaborate ceremonies to invoke auspicious conditions for the future of the Dharma. The supreme masters of the lineage came to Tsurphu to bestow on him the *Mahamudra*, *Six Yogas of Naropa*, and many other transmissions of his own tradition, as well as those of the great *tertöns* Migyur Dorje and Taksham Nuden Dorje. Karmapa brought all of these transmitted methods to perfection.

During the life of the previous Karmapa, many Kagyu monasteries had suffered great damage at the hands of the Mongol chieftains. Yeshe Dorje restored Tsurphu, adding many new images and shrines. Through his teaching and miraculous power, he rekindled the lamp of the doctrine and became the object of veneration for scholars and masters everywhere. When the supreme ruler of Tibet, the Fifth Dalai Lama, passed away, the regent who assumed authority appointed Treho Rinpoche, an important personal assistant of the Dalai Lama, to serve as chief lama of the state monasteries. Treho Rinpoche came to Tsurphu to ask the Karmapa for instruction. He soon became Yeshe Dorje's disciple and helped in many ways to heal the divisions that had arisen among the various schools.

Yeshe Dorje demonstrated the accomplishment of enlightenment in astonishing ways. Sometimes he manifested to several students at the same time in different locations. He used blessed water to restore sight to a famous lama of Tingri, who was blind in both eyes. Through his omniscience, he located the reincarnations of the masters of the Kagyu lineage in many different parts of Tibet and Nepal. After entrusting his close students with the sacred letter predicting his next incarnation, Karmapa Yeshe Dorje passed away at the age of twenty-six.



Changchub Dorje 1703: 1732

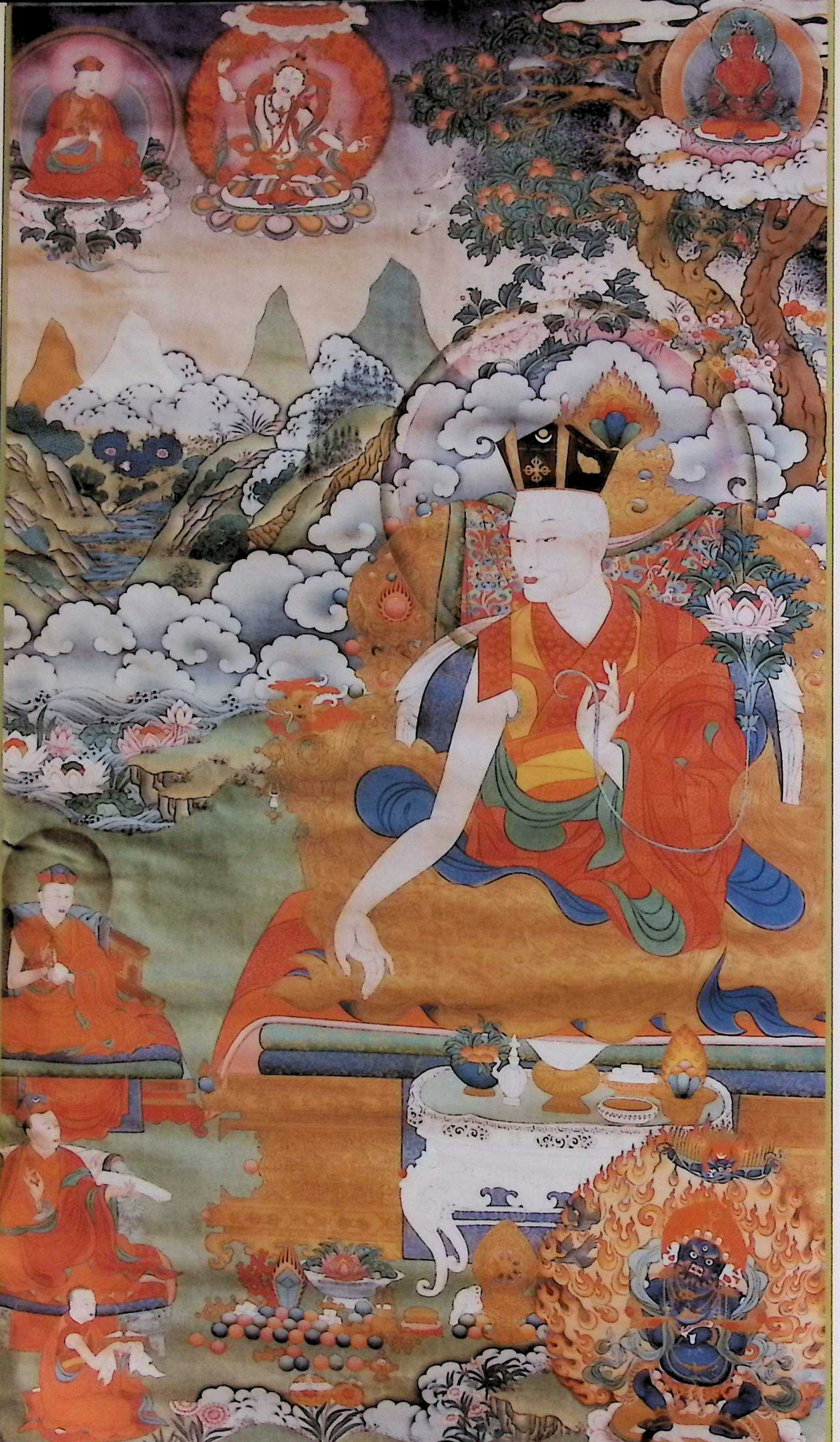
While selling pottery in the market one day, Changchub Dorje's father met the great *tertön* Migyur Dorje. "Seated atop a high throne," the *tertön* said, "you will have no need to sell pottery!" His prediction indicated the status to which the potter would rise following the birth of his son. The next year, Changchub Dorje took birth in the kingdom of Derge, in eastern Tibet, near the residence of Migyur Dorje. At the age of two months, he began to speak and announced that he was Karmapa. Migyur Dorje confirmed the child's announcement, and news spread in all directions that the Karmapa had been born.

The principal lamas of the Kagyu lineage sent representatives to examine the child, and found that details relating to both family and birthplace concurred with the sacred prediction letter left by the previous Karmapa. The lamas therefore performed ceremonies for the child's long life and protection. Many lineage masters came to pay their respects, and in their company, Changchub Dorje proceeded first to Karma Monastery and then to Tsurphu, where he was enthroned as the Twelfth Karmapa. He received the complete transmission of the lineage and cultivated it in his stream of being, displaying his mastery through miracles and unconditional compassion for all sentient beings.

Karmapa received many transmissions through dreams. In one dream, he visited the pure land of Shambala, where King Rigden, the lord of the realm and holder of the Kalachakra lineage, bestowed empowerment and transmission upon him. In his dreams, he also requested and received profound instructions from the Buddha Shakyamuni, Lord Atisha, and other great masters of the past.

In the company of eminent masters, the Karmapa traveled over the Himalayas on a pilgrimage to Nepal. The King of Nepal celebrated their arrival with a grand reception. At the time, a severe epidemic and a terrible drought plagued the country. At the request of the King, Karmapa performed rituals which swiftly brought an end to the epidemic and caused abundant rain to fall. Karmapa visited the holy sites of Nepal, including the great *stupas* of Bodhanath and Swayambunath. He visited Namo Buddha, where, in a former life, the Buddha had given his own flesh to a starving tigress who was about to eat her cubs. Karmapa taught extensively throughout Nepal, meeting with many great scholars expert in the profound knowledge of all fields of Buddhism. He then proceeded to India, where he and his party paid homage to the Buddha Shakyamuni at Kushinagara, site of the Buddha's *parinirvana*.

After returning to Tsurphu by way of Mount Kailash, Karmapa accepted an invitation from the emperor of China to visit the Imperial Court. Before his departure, he bestowed the complete transmission of the lineage upon the Eighth Tai Situ Rinpoche, Chokyi Jungnay, and made him responsible for the Kagyu lineage in Tibet. He then set forth in the company of the Eighth Shamar Rinpoche, visiting many monasteries and holy sites along the way, granting transmissions and instructions. Altogether, the journey to China lasted seven years. Soon after he arrived, Changchub Dorje wrote a sacred prediction letter describing the details of his next birth, which he sent by messenger to Tai Situ Rinpoche. Not long afterwards, Karmapa passed away in China at the age of thirty.



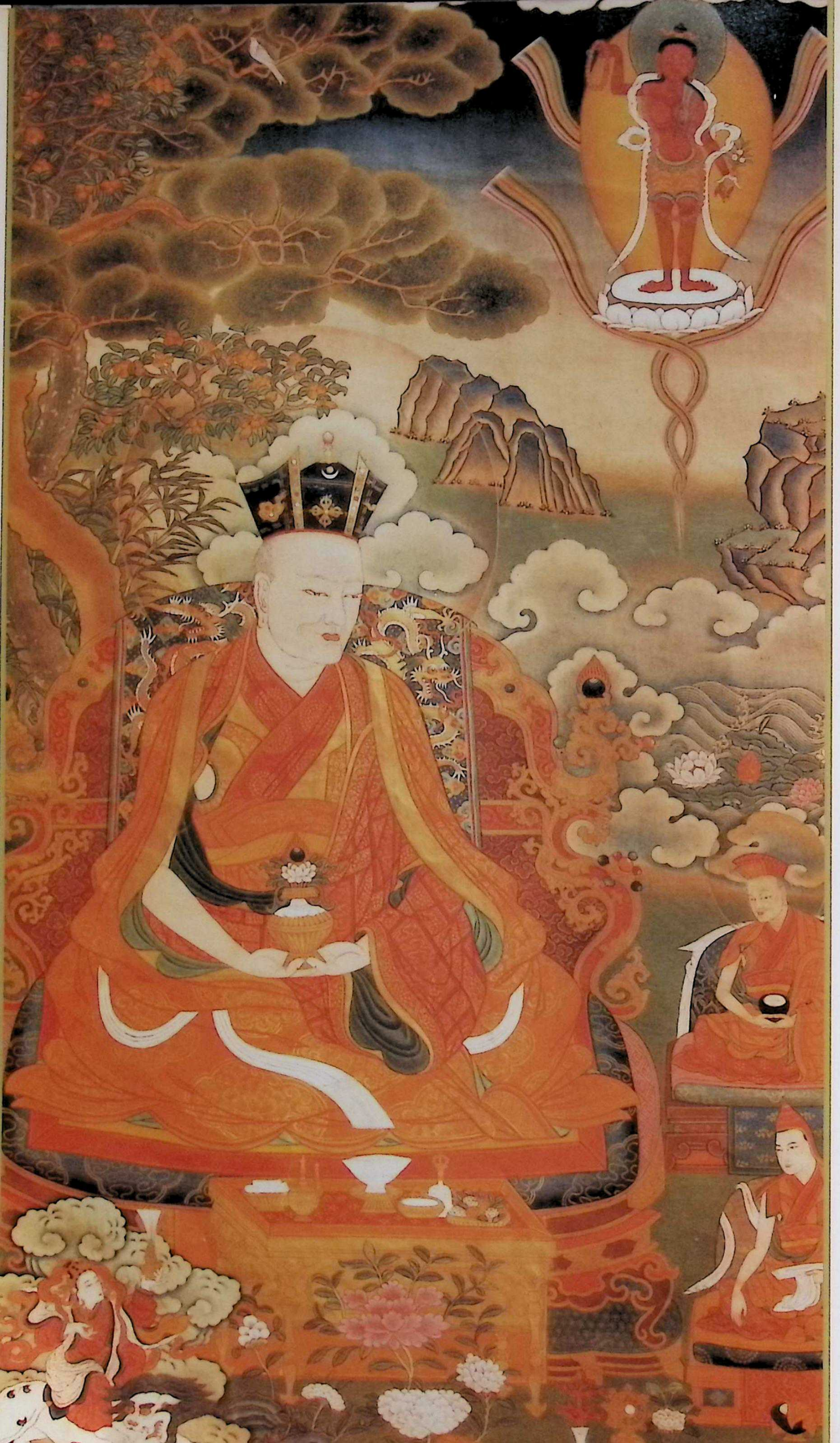
Dudul Dorje 1733: 1797

Karmapa Dudul Dorje was born in Nyen Chawa, in central Tibet, to noble parents renowned for their practice of virtue. Special marks appeared on his body at birth: A red symbol of power marked the area of his heart, and a white letter *Ah*, indicating the enlightened qualities of speech, appeared on his tongue. As a small child, he described details of journeys to India, Nepal, and China that he had made during previous incarnations. Deities appeared directly to him, and their intensity and majesty were felt by those around him, as well. Once, a boy dressed all in white appeared and scattered handfuls of flowers at his feet from a crystal plate. "Who are you?" the Karmapa asked, whereupon the boy transformed into a wrathful being surrounded by a field of celestial fire. "I am the protector Dorje Bernachen," the visitor replied. "I manifest wrathfully from the sphere of primordial awareness. As Master and Protector, there is no difference between you and me." Then Dorje Bernachen vanished like a rainbow dissolving into space.

Escorted by a mounted procession to Tsurphu Monastery, Dudul Dorje was enthroned as the Thirteenth Karmapa in the presence of high lamas, officials, and hosts of gods and men. The proclamation of his name resounded to the highest level of the pure realms. He devoted his youth to intensive study, and received the entirety of the transmission from the principal masters of the time. Sometime after this period, he was urgently requested to come to Lhasa, where the Jokhang temple was in danger of being destroyed by streams of water pouring from under the statue of the Buddha. Though all attempts to stop the flood had failed, a prophecy by Guru Rinpoche indicated that the master called Karmapa should be asked to intercede in such an event. Upon his arrival, Karmapa performed a ritual invoking the *Naga* spirits, and dissuaded them from removing the holy statue to the *Naga* realm. The flood immediately abated, after which Karmapa offered a white silk scarf to the statue of the Buddha. Miraculously, the statue raised its hands to accept the scarf.

Karmapa journeyed to eastern Tibet, teaching all who came to meet him—not only while formally encamped, but even while riding on horseback. He habitually wore the simple clothes of an ordinary monk, and though a master of elegant and ornamented formal language, he taught in terms easily understood by all. Even those holding sectarian views recognized Dudul Dorje as the living Buddha, and many came to him to dispel their doubts. His replies, arising from his compassion and direct realization, caused the learned to forget their arrogance and resolve the contradictions inherent in their views.

Dudul Dorje spent many years in meditation at the retreat which the second Karmapa had built on the mountain behind Tsurphu. The very embodiment of the Buddha, he distributed the liberating nectar of instruction to countless beings. He is said to have been able to transmit the Dharma to small animals—including mice, rabbits, birds, cats and even insects—who approached him peacefully, drawn by his spontaneous compassion. Karmapa passed into the pure realm at the age of sixty-five, accompanied by a rain of flowers and the sound of celestial music evident to all.



Tegchog Dorje 1798: 1868

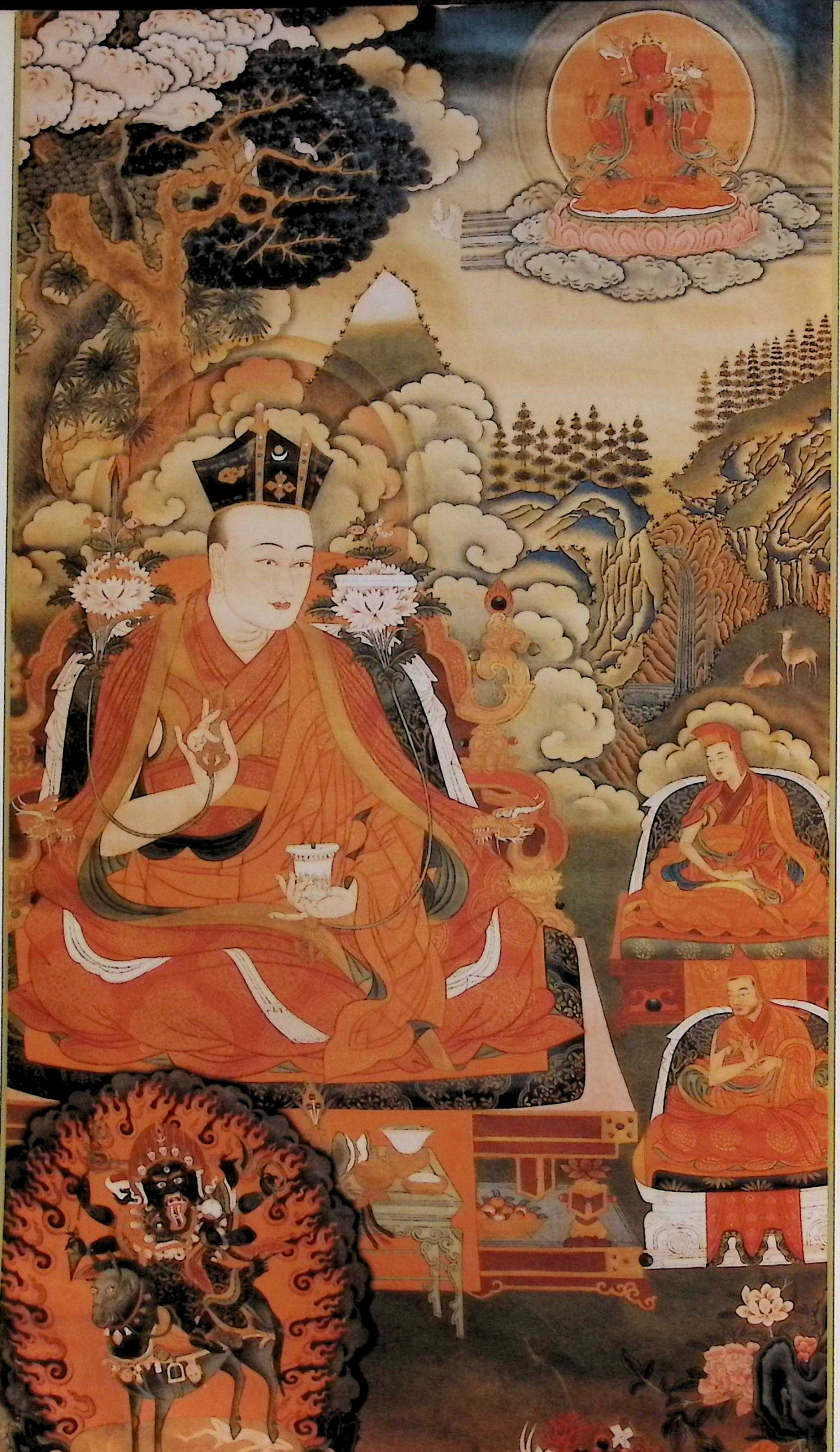
The Fourteenth Karmapa, Tegchog Dorje, was born in Danang, in eastern Tibet. At his birth, flowers of all colors bloomed in the middle of winter and rainbows filled the sky. He sat up as soon as he was born, wiped his face, and recited the Sanskrit alphabet. Humans and nonhumans alike proclaimed his birth in all directions, and soon the Karmapa's great traveling tent monastery, *Karmay Garchen*, arrived in Danang and escorted him to Karma Monastery. There, he received novice ordination and commenced his studies of both the Kagyu and Nyingma transmissions of Dharma.

Karmapa studied for many years at Karma Monastery before proceeding to Tsurphu, the principal seat of the Karmapas since the time of Dusum Khyenpa. At Tsurphu, he took final ordination and received transmissions from many accomplished masters. He demonstrated limitless proficiency in all areas, mastering the various scripts of the Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan languages, and displaying the utmost skill in painting, sculpture, and other arts. He exhibited profound understanding of astrology and a detailed mastery of healing and medicine. In his realization of the inner meaning of the Buddha's teaching and his mastery of explanation, debate, composition, and the methods of the profound path of *Vajrayana*, he manifested the state of the primordially enlightened *Buddha* Dorje Chang.

At Tsurphu, Karmapa enforced the strictest observance of the monastic rule and restored temples and *stupas*, adding many new images. He invited the great *tertön* Chogyur Dechen Lingpa from eastern Tibet, and instituted the annual performance of the ceremonial dances of his *terma* tradition to invoke the blessing of the *eight manifestations of Guru Rinpoche*. Karmapa fulfilled the aspirations of his students, teaching each according to his capacity and understanding. He saved the lives of countless beings by causing the release of prisoners, prohibiting hunting, and protecting domestic animals from slaughter.

Tegchog Dorje inspired the great nineteenth century renaissance of Dharma in Tibet. Under his influence, great masters of the time—such as Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye, Chogyur Lingpa, and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo—sought, received, and promulgated rare Indian and Tibetan transmissions, which were in danger of being lost. Without bias, they revitalized the Dharma of all schools.

Tegchog Dorje gathered his manifest form into the sphere of ultimate reality at the age of seventy-one. At the time of his death, a sweet fragrance filled the countryside, and the sky was laced with rainbows and a blizzard of white, red, yellow, and blue flowers. Disciples beheld Karmapa in different places in many different forms—young, old, dressed as a monk, and clad in celestial garments, accompanied by deities. In this way, Karmapa manifested the attainment of freedom of the *illusory body of wisdom*.



Khakhyab Dorje 1871: 1922

The Fifteenth Karmapa, Khakhyab Dorje, took birth in central Tibet in the region of Nyangtod. His parents were accomplished practitioners, living in accord with the *ten principles of virtuous conduct.* Several great masters experienced visions pointing to Khakhyab Dorje as the incarnation of Karmapa. In particular, the goddess Palden Lhamo appeared to Migyur Wangyal, head of the Drukpa Kagyu school, and showed him the region, house, family, and child clearly revealed in her hand-held mirror. At her urging, he proceeded to Nyangtod and identified the child. Although, for the sake of the child's well-being, Migyur Wangyal temporarily set a seal of secrecy upon his identity, Karmapa's fame spread so quickly that he was soon visited by a constant stream of human and celestial visitors.

At the age of six, Khakhyab Dorje proceeded to Tsurphu, where he was enthroned with great ceremony. Without the benefit of any teaching, he displayed a profound understanding of countless subjects. An atmosphere of miracles surrounded him, and on many occasions the sky filled with displays of rainbows and rolling peals of thunder. Once, he was asked to consecrate a temple in the faraway region of Litang. Though unable to go in person, he drew an image of the place on paper and playfully poured scented rice on it at the appointed time. In the same moment in Litang, white clouds gathered in the sky, pouring down a rain of scented rice grains that blessed the temple inside and out.

Khakhyab Dorje traveled to Palpung Monastery in eastern Tibet to receive the transmission of the lineage at the feet of his supreme master, Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye. While at Palpung, Karmapa recognized the birthplace of the Eleventh Tai Situ Rinpoche in a vision. He quickly drew the layout of the particular valley, the form of the mountain opposite, the river and its bridges, and the appearance of the house, including the location of all its windows and doors. Guided by the drawing, the search party found the child without difficulty. Khakhyab Dorje enthroned the young Tai Situpa and personally supervised all the details of his education and care. Afterwards, Khakhyab Dorje went into retreat at Tsari, a sacred place marked by a naturally formed image of the deity Khorlo Dechog. There, he demonstrated the ability to pass unobstructed through the solid rock of the mountain, and other displays of the interpenetration of mind and matter confirmed his mastery over the four elements.

In 1898, Karmapa undertook the long journey to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, where he bestowed the transmission of Mahamudra upon the King and many devoted followers. During the last ten years of his life, the Karmapa remained in strict retreat, in intensive meditation without interruption. At the age of fifty-two, he entrusted to his personal attendant the sacred prediction letter describing the circumstances of his next incarnation. Then, he assumed the *vajra* meditation posture and passed away to the sphere of peace and clear light without center or boundary, the *dharmakaya* body of the ultimate nature.

Rangjung Rigpe Dorje 1923: 1981

Rangjung Rigpe Dorje was born into a noble family in the kingdom of Derge, in eastern Tibet. Shortly before his birth, he disappeared from his mother's womb for one full day, and her belly became completely flat. The next day her womb filled once more, and people around her could hear the unborn child reciting the *mantra* of Chenrezig, the Bodhiśattva of Compassion. When he was born, the child immediately stood up and started walking, saying, "Mother! Mother! I am going!" A gentle rain and rainbows manifested outside, and the water in the shrine offering bowls turned to milk. To protect the miraculous child from harm, the family kept these events secret.

Guided by the prediction letter left by the previous Karmapa, and by visions which clearly revealed the birthplace of the new incarnation, the supreme lamas of the lineage quickly identified the child. For several years, Karmapa's parents raised him at home. At the age of seven, he proceeded to Palpung Monastery, where he received the novice ordination from the Eleventh Tai Situpa. His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama performed the "hair-cutting ceremony" in Lhasa, and named him Thubten Gelek Palzangpo. During the ceremony, His Holiness perceived the mystic hat woven of the hair of *dakinis* floating over the Karmapa's head. Later, in the presence of official representatives of Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, India, Ladakh and China, the supreme masters of the Kagyu lineage, headed by the Eleventh Tai Situpa, enthroned Karmapa at Tsurphu Monastery. He then began his studies, receiving transmissions from the masters of all the great lineages without any sectarian bias.

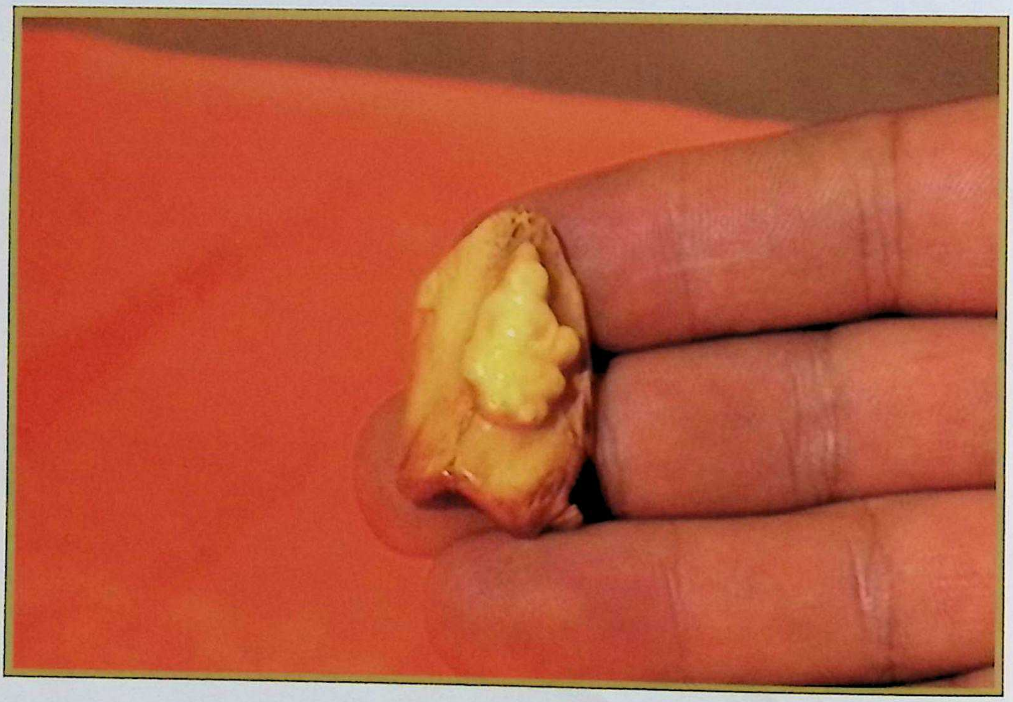
During his travels in eastern Tibet, Karmapa performed many miracles. On one occasion, joking with a high master about the ability to transform material reality, he drew a sword from his attendant's scabbard and easily tied the blade into a knot with his bare hands. At another time, when his traveling monastery had made camp, he was seen riding a deer high in the air along the ropes that ran from tent to tent. While crossing a frozen river, he impressed his foot in the ice, the footprint remaining visible in the water even after the ice melted in spring. It is still visible to the pilgrims who visit the site to this day.

During the Sixteenth Karmapa's lifetime, communists took control of China and gradually asserted their power over Tibet. Rangjung Rigpe Dorje made several pilgrimages to Bhutan, Nepal, and India, and the leaders of those countries greeted him with great honor, offering their assistance. When war reached central Tibet, Karmapa was forced to leave his homeland and seek refuge in India. Chögyal, the King of Sikkim, offered Karmapa the choice of several sites, and Karmapa chose to build his new Dharma seat near the old Rumtek Monastery, founded by the Ninth Karmapa.

Without discrimination, Karmapa graced all he met with his presence and blessing. Often, while bestowing empowerment, he would descend the throne and administer the blessings to the assembled disciples with his own hands. He sent the lamas of his lineage throughout the world to teach wherever the Dharma was requested, and blessed more supplicants with novice and full ordination than any previous Karmapa. Directly and through others, he contributed to the establishment of innumerable communities dedicated to the practice of Buddhism. He also sponsored the reprinting of the fundamental canon of the Buddha's teachings and their commentaries, and distributed these works to monasteries and centers throughout the Himalayan region.

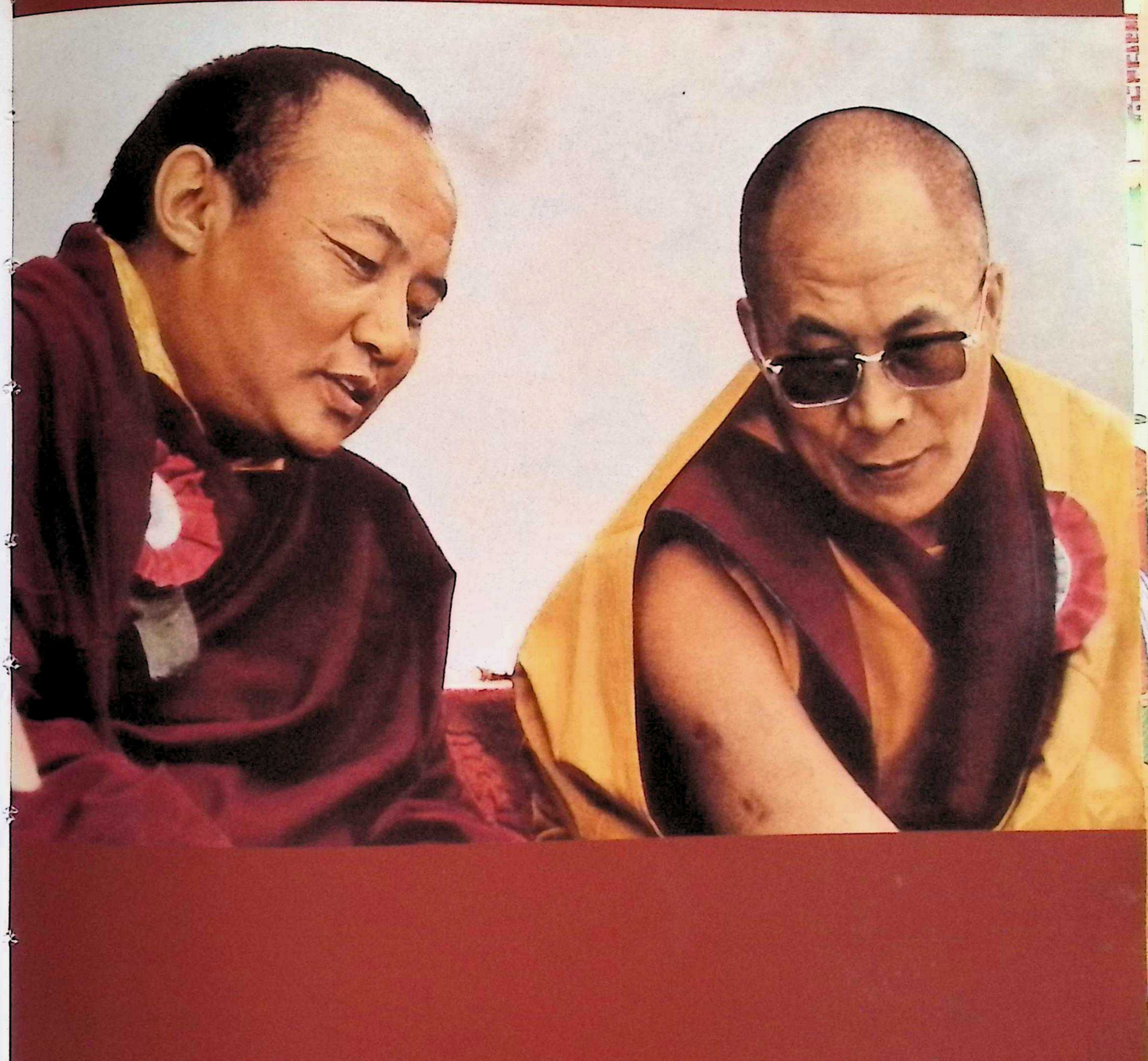
In 1981, after manifesting signs of illness, Karmapa left the sacred prediction letter describing the circumstances of his next rebirth with the Twelfth Tai Situ Rinpoche. He spent his final days in an American hospital in Zion, Illinois, where he told the Venerable Lama Norlha and Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche, "I see Tibet, and there I clearly see my father and mother of the future." Through his gentle, loving kindness and the miraculous display of freedom over ordinary physical reality, he consistently surprised and ultimately overwhelmed the doctors and nurses who attended him. For several days after his death, the region of his heart stayed warm and his skin remained supple, which, according to Tibetan Buddhism, are marks of profound realization of peace and unity.

Further miraculous signs were observed at the time of Karmapa's cremation at Rumtek in India. Relics fell unburned from the fire. Rainbows appeared in the clear sky, and many people perceived the Karmapa looking down from above. After the cremation, a small footprint was found in the ashes, pointing in the direction of Tibet.

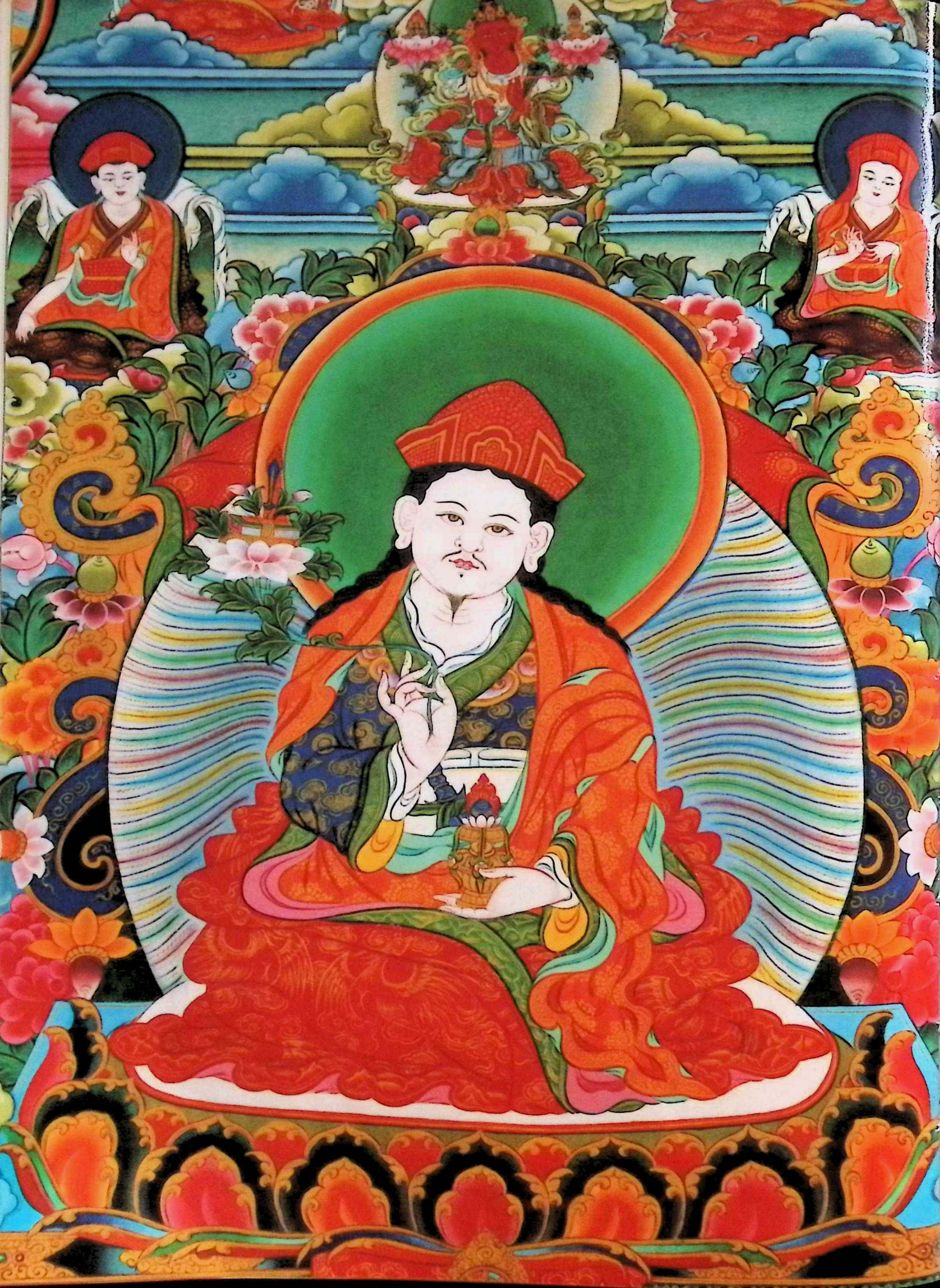


above: Spontaneous formation of a buddha image on a bone relic from the Sixteenth Karmapa's cremation.

right: His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama with His Holiness the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa.



The Life and Activity of Chogyur Dechen Lingpa



The Life and Activity of Chogyur Dechen Lingpa

As the preceding biographies demonstrate, enlightened masters are not obscured by the layers of confusion that cloud the minds of ordinary beings. Their extraordinary insight penetrates even the most dense and oppressive of these confusing veils: time itself. One such master was Chogyur Dechen Lingpa, whose vision of past and future incarnations of the Karmapa lineage is notable both in its brilliant detail and vivid correlation to historical fact.

Chogyur Lingpa was a *tertön*, the Tibetan term for an individual who reveals previously hidden teachings, known in Tibetan as *terma*, or treasures. The tradition of *terma* originated with Guru Rinpoche, who, together with King Trisong Detsen and Bodhisattva Shantarakshita, established Buddhism in Tibet in the eighth century. Guru Rinpoche foresaw that the Dharma would undergo distinct periods of decline throughout the history of Tibet, and in order to preserve the power and purity of the lineage transmissions, he concealed a wide range of teachings that would be discovered at a future date.

Together with his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal, Guru Rinpoche traversed the country, concealing *terma* in temples, caves, lakes, rocks, and even in the sky, under circumstances ensuring that each would come to light at the appropriate time in the future. Some of these hidden treasures consisted of books, most of which were written in a special symbolic script. Some contained highly specific teachings for certain practitioners yet to be born. Other *terma* consisted of precious images and substances designed to ripen the minds of future beings. Typically, a god was charged with protecting each treasure until the intended *tertön* came to reveal it.

Guru Rinpoche bestowed his lineage on twenty-five principal disciples who took birth at various points during the following centuries in order to reveal specific *terma*. Chogyur Lingpa was understood to be the reincarnation of Prince Murub Tsenpo, whose father, King Trisong Detsen, had invited Guru Rinpoche to Tibet. One of the last of the one hundred and eight great *tertöns* directly prophesied by Guru Rinpoche, Chogyur Lingpa was born in 1829, in Nangchen, in eastern Tibet, during the lifetime of the Fourteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. Having previously incarnated twelve times as a *tertön*, he naturally manifested a refined religious sensitivity from an early age. His family called him Norbu Tenzin, Precious Jewel, Holder of the Teaching.

left: Chogyur Dechen Lingpa.

As a child, Chogyur Lingpa found a religious clay image known as a *tsa-tsa*, which he carried from then on in his jacket pocket. Some years later, he was attacked by dogs belonging to a neighboring family, and as he attempted to defend himself, the *tsa-tsa* fell from his pocket and broke apart. Among the fragments, he found a small scroll of paper, which later proved to be a list of all the *terma* he would eventually discover. Guided by this list, Chogyur Lingpa traveled to a place known as Drakar Chungdzong, where he found twenty texts that had been concealed solely for his own practice. He also found there a crystal, a mirror, and a *vajra* that had belonged to his former incarnation, Prince Murub Tsenpo.

Soon afterwards, Chogyur Lingpa entered a monastery, where he received novice ordination and began formal studies in the *vajrayana*. He also learned Tibetan ritual dance, a form of yoga consisting of traditionally prescribed steps that bring blessing to the dancers, spectators, local gods, and the environment. Chogyur Lingpa demonstrated such skill in this difficult art that he eventually rose to the position of dance master. However, in the midst of an important ceremonial occasion, he suddenly beheld Guru Rinpoche and his principal disciples performing a dance never before seen. He began to follow the steps revealed in his vision, causing great confusion among the dancers following his lead. As a result of this divergence from the prescribed steps, considered an extremely serious error, Chogyur Lingpa was expelled from the monastery.

At the age of twenty-five, he traveled to Palpung Monastery seeking the guidance of Pema Nyinche Wangpo, the Ninth Tai Situ Rinpoche. As a test, Tai Situ Rinpoche asked him to relieve the drought afflicting eastern Tibet at the time, and Chogyur Lingpa promptly caused it to rain. Convinced of his accomplishments, Tai Situ Rinpoche advised him to meet Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, both important *tertöns*. Among Guru Rinpoche's chief disciples, Jamgon Kongtrul had been the great translator Vairocana, while Jamyang Khyentse had been the great Indian master Vimalamitra. The three *tertöns* developed unwavering confidence in one another and became inseparable in their activities. Jamyang Khyentse received the complete empowerments associated with Chogyur Lingpa's *termas*, and together they transcribed the *terma* texts into conventional script. Jamgon Kongtrul, meanwhile, became one of Chogyur Lingpa's root masters.

Chogyur Lingpa eventually returned to his home in Nangchen, where Guru Rinpoche and Yeshe Tsogyal manifested to him directly, after which he was able to speak with Guru Rinpoche any time he wished. Under Guru Rinpoche's guidance, he established Kela Monastery in Nangchen, and during this period he discovered many more important *terma*. Once, for example, he used his bare hand to open a hole in a boulder, discovering within a light-filled cavity that contained a number of ceremonial daggers, known as *purbas*, each of which emitted fire. He extracted the largest dagger, made of celestial metal, and removed from around its handle a parchment on which the practice text for the protector associated with the *purba* had been written. Chogyur Lingpa later offered the *purba* to the Fourteenth Karmapa.

Later, he visited a valley where Guru Rinpoche and his principal disciples had practiced for seven years in retreat. Along the valley rim, glacial mountains of white stone rose from forests of juniper inhabited by deer, bear, and other wild animals. Waterfalls spilled from the surrounding ice fields, descending through the valley amid banks of wild flowers. From a particular cave of blue rock, hidden by a crystal waterfall through which the sun projected swirling rainbows, Chogyur Lingpa extracted a precious statue and several treasure texts.

Eventually, Chogyur Lingpa returned to Palpung Monastery in the company of Jamgon Kongtrul and Jamyang Khyentse. During their visit, they performed rituals associated with several *terma* cycles, and Chogyur Lingpa experienced visions of sacred dances, which he taught to the Palpung lamas. He also visited Tsari, a sacred area behind Palpung where an image of Khorlo Dechog appears naturally in the rock. A *terma* he had previously discovered described the area as a celestial *mandala* guarded by the *Naga* lords of four lakes. While visiting Tsari, Chogyur Lingpa discovered several more *terma* and Jamgon Kongtrul discovered a number of jewels, which he later used to make sacred statues. At the invitation of the Fourteenth Gyalwang Karmapa, Chogyur Lingpa also traveled to Tsurphu, where he bestowed the transmissions associated with a variety of *terma* and taught the *Tersar* ritual dances. The Karmapa afterwards instituted this cycle of ritual dances as an annual ceremony for blessing both the monastery and the country.

After meditating in retreat for three years, on the mountain behind Tsurphu, Chogyur Lingpa made a pilgrimage to Lhasa to visit the temples of the Buddha established in the seventh century by King Songtsen Gampo. He also journeyed to Samye, the monastery founded by Guru Rinpoche, Abbot Shantarakshita, and King Trisong Detsen. During his visit, powerful protector deities possessed two of the resident monks. They prostrated to Chogyur Lingpa, and asked him to perform the ritual known as *Binding the Three Kinds of Gods to Strict Oath* at the summit of Mount Hepori, where Guru Rinpoche had once bound the gods of Tibet to protect Buddhism. At the same time, the Lhasa government requested Chogyur Lingpa to perform other rituals to protect the country.

Next, he visited the famous monastery of Mindroling, founded in 1670 by the great *tertön* Terdak Lingpa. There, he performed the ceremony of the *Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*, according to the lineage passed down from the time of Guru Rinpoche. Afterwards, he slowly made his way back to eastern Tibet, teaching extensively and bestowing *terma* transmissions in many monasteries belonging to the various lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. In the valley called the Primordially Victorious Treasury of Space, he established the monastic community called Neten, near which he built his own residence.

During the years that followed, Chogyur Lingpa continued to perform miraculous deeds for the benefit of sentient beings. Perhaps one of the most spectacular occurred in the kingdom of Derge, in a place called Karmo Taktsang, where Guru Rinpoche had appeared in the wrathful form known as Dorje Trollo. At an enormous assembly attended by the King of Derge and people from around the region, Chogyur Lingpa approached a large boulder. He inserted his hand directly into the rock and pulled out a *vajra*, which he left half-protruding from the stone. Then he extracted a container that held a text called *Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo*, a profound guide to the stages of the path of the *Great Perfection*. Raising the precious text in his hands, he blessed all of the people who had gathered to watch.

The party encamped that night at the site of the discovery, chanting *mantras* and prayers associated with Guru Rinpoche. In the morning, they climbed through the hills to a frozen blue lake. Chogyur Lingpa told those who accompanied him to throw rocks to crack the ice, which parted with a loud boom. Chogyur Lingpa removed the yogi's garment he wore under his robes, fastened it to his belt, and cast it into the lake. As he drew the garment back toward him like a net, scorpions and snakes crowded the surface of the lake. He threw the garment once more into the lake, and this time drew in a great lump of gold, and the lake itself became filled with gold.

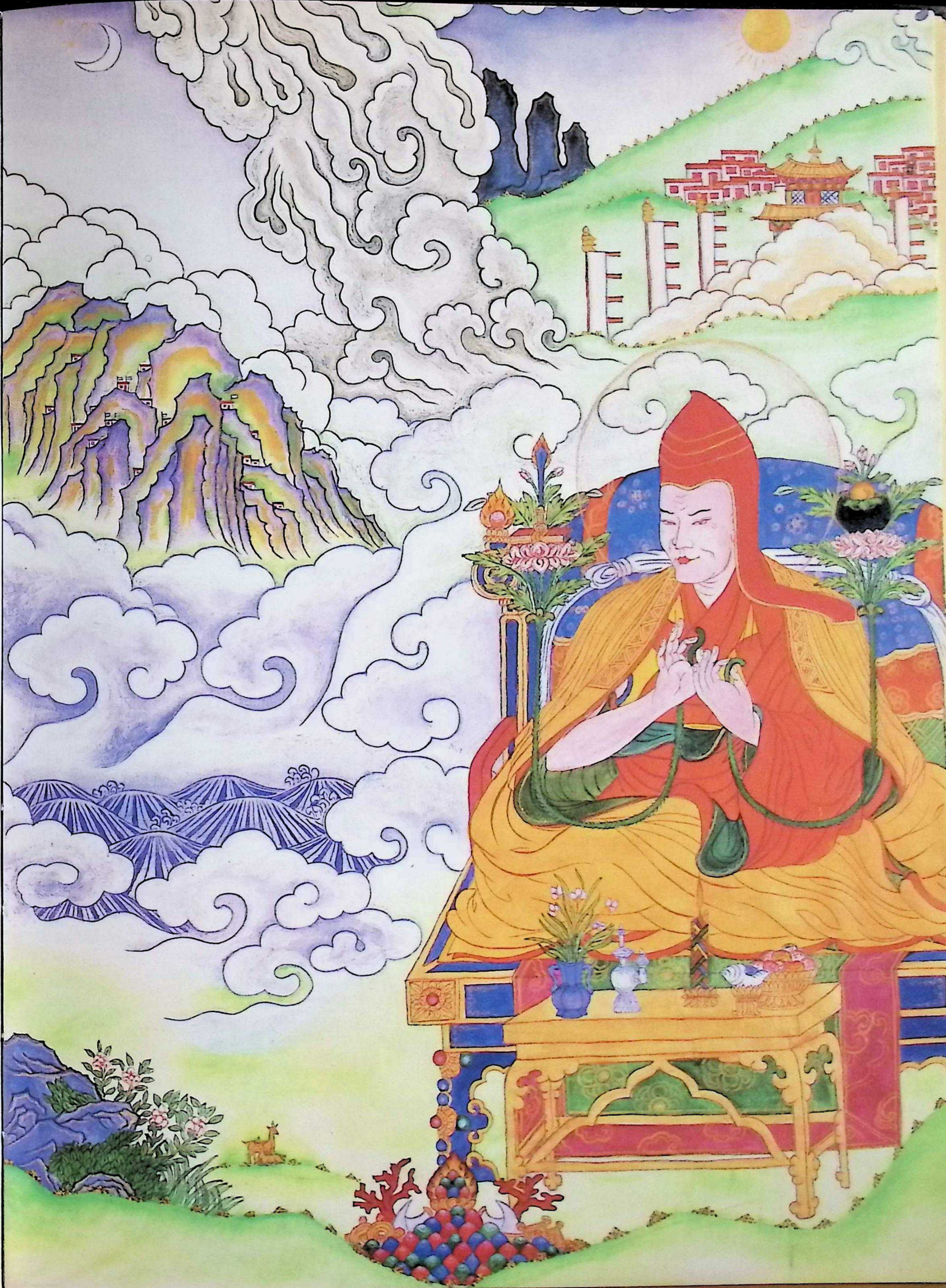
Sometime afterwards, during a visit to Karma Monastery, Chogyur Lingpa beheld the vision cherished by practitioners of the Karma Kagyu lineage. In this vision, Guru Rinpoche appeared, surrounded by twenty-one manifestations of the Karmapa. Each of the fourteen incarnations who had taken birth through the period including Chogyur Lingpa's lifetime appeared according to the traditional description. Seven future incarnations appeared in settings that prophetically indicated the specific manner in which their activity would manifest in the future. Seated on a white snow lion in the center of the vision, Guru Rinpoche proclaimed his divine identity to Chogyur Lingpa and bestowed upon him a teaching of the inseparability of the three *kayas* of the Buddha, which manifest as various deities.

Chogyur Lingpa described the vision to his disciple, Karmai Khenchen Rinchen Tarjay, Supreme Abbot of Karma Monastery. Karmai Khenchen instructed artists to render it in murals painted in the main shrine hall of the monastery, and he himself painted the vision on cloth. This painting serves as the illustration of Guru Rinpoche's prophecy in the following chapter of this book. A verbal account of the vision was recorded by Chogyur Lingpa's foremost disciples in the sacred book named *Sounding the Tones of the Melody of Auspiciousness.*

Throughout the remainder of his life, Chogyur Lingpa continued to spread the Dharma throughout eastern Tibet, granting teachings and empowerment to innumerable lamas and their students. In all, he revealed thirty-seven collections of teachings hidden in various locations, and received a multitude of profound transmissions through visions and recollections of his former lives as an accomplished master. He discovered countless holy statues, sacred implements, relics, garments, and ornaments that had belonged to Guru Rinpoche and his students, as well as sacred objects belonging to various Indian masters. He also found a wide array of medicines and sacred substances that convey blessing. The vast number of precious texts he discovered and transmitted are referred to as the *Tersar*, or "New Treasure" lineage. Together with many earlier *terma* lineages, the *Tersar* constitutes an essential part of both the Nyingma and the Kagyu transmissions.

At the end of his life, Chogyur Lingpa bestowed upon Jamgon Kongtrul all of the *terma* he had not yet passed on to others. He passed away at Neten Monastery, where his body was enshrined in a golden *stupa*. Two weeks later, he appeared in a vision to Jamyang Khyentse and bestowed many transmissions upon him. He further told Jamyang Khyentse that he would appear in a new paradise in the western direction where his followers would take birth under conditions ideal for the accomplishment of the Dharma.

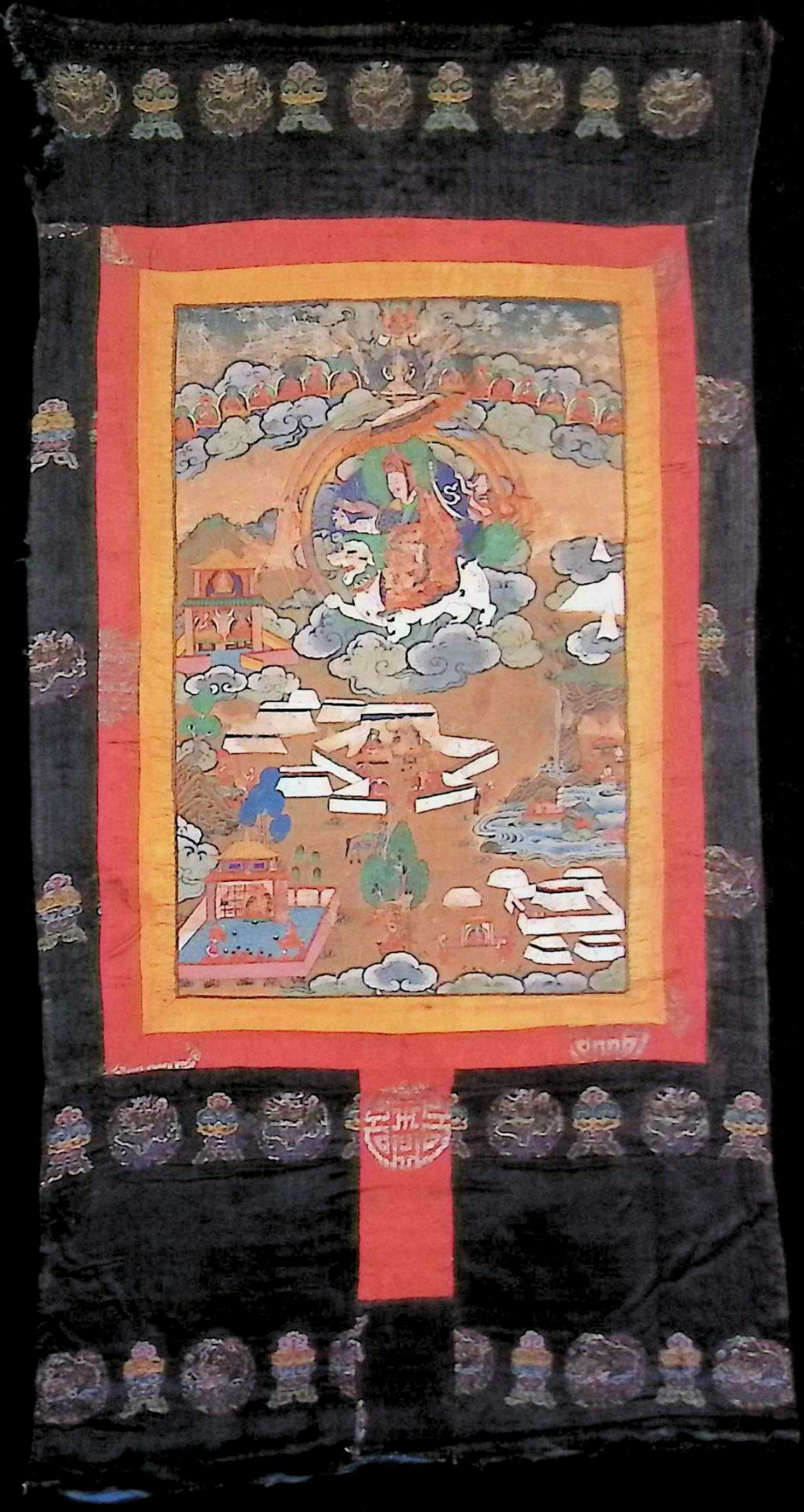
right: Karmai Khenchen, Supreme Abbot of Karma Monastery, who depicted Chogyur Lingpa's vision in a cloth painting.



The Sacred Prophecy

During a visit to Karma Monastery, the great 19th century *tertön* Chogyur Dechen Lingpa was granted a vision of twenty-one incarnations of the Karmapa. Afterwards, he described what he'd seen to Karmai Khenchen Rinchen Tarjay, Supreme Abbot of Karma Monastery, who later painted the vision on silk. Carefully preserved for more than a century, the painting seen here has been photographed both in full and in detail in order to illustrate the prophetic vision as recorded by Chogyur Lingpa's foremost disciples.

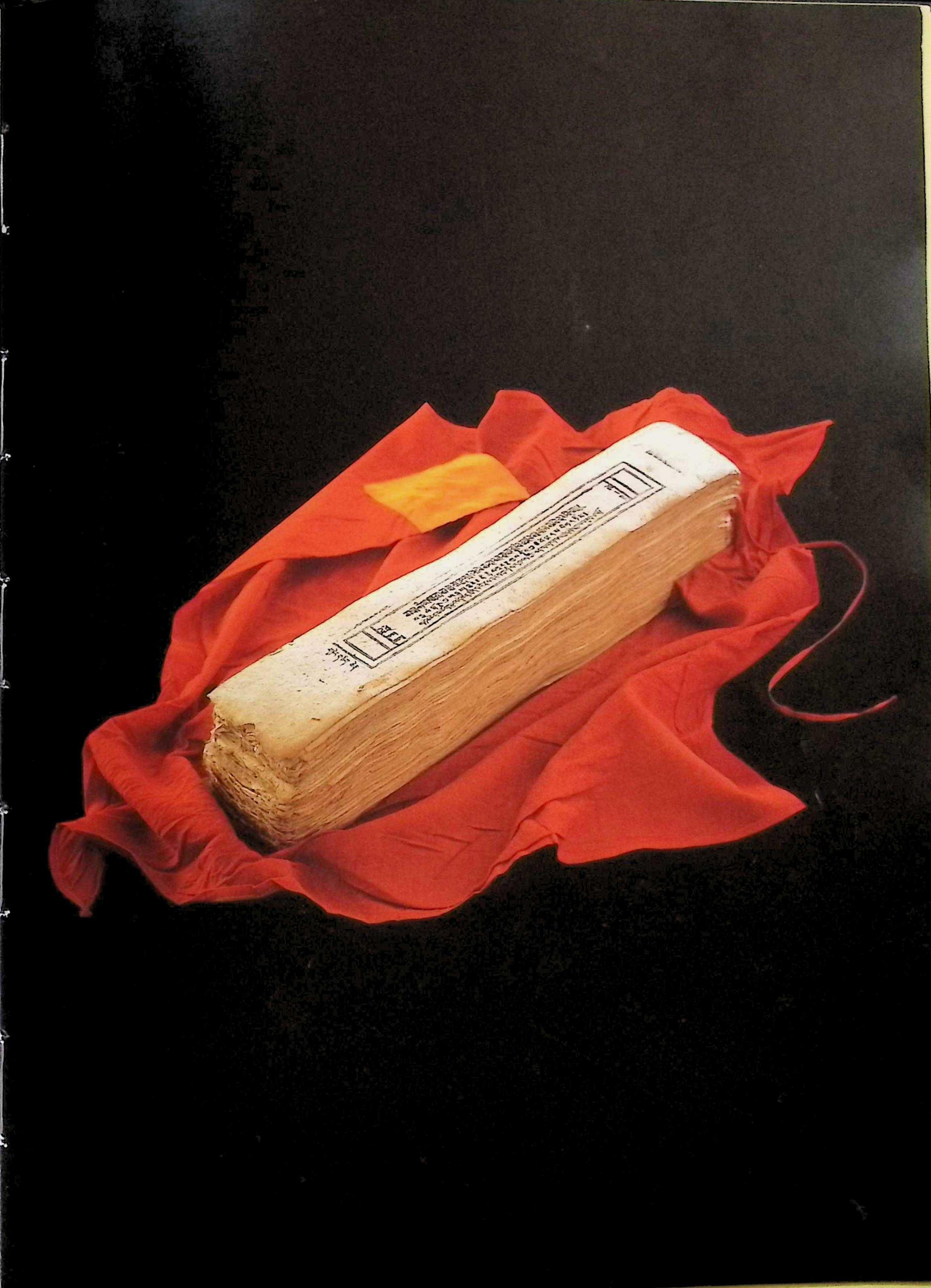
The large figure in the center of the painting is Guru Rinpoche, who appeared directly to Chogyur Lingpa and revealed his inseparable identity with the Buddha Kuntuzangpo, primordial Buddha Dorje Chang, Buddha Shakyamuni, Buddha Amitabha, and the Bodhisattva Chenrezig. Above Guru Rinpoche's head appear representations of the fourteen incarnations of the Karmapa who had taken birth through Chogyur Lingpa's lifetime. Figures representing seven successive future incarnations, each appearing in settings indicating the nature of their future activities, occupy the remainder of the painting.

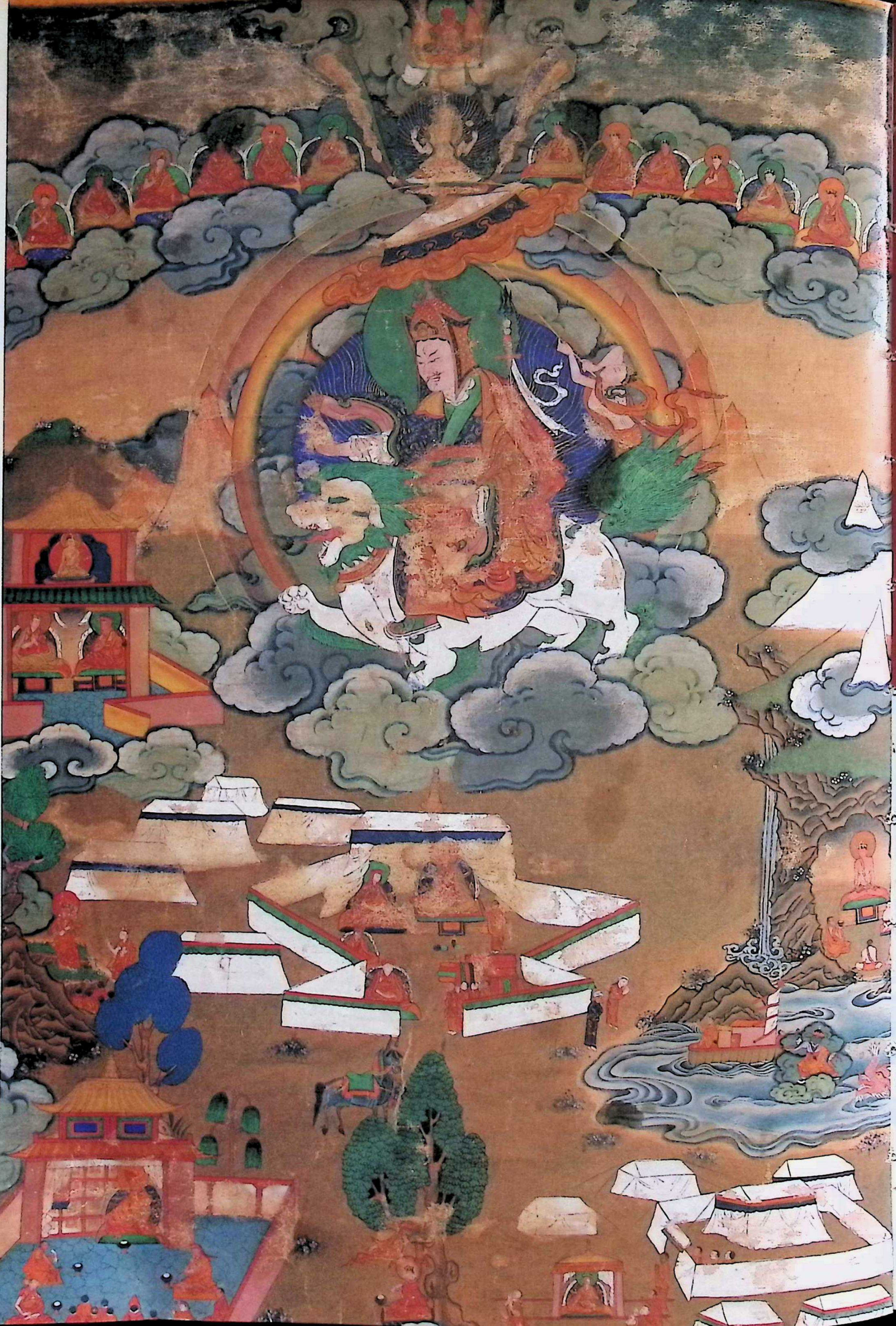


Chogyur Lingpa's disciples committed his oral description of his vision of the Karmapas to writing in a sacred book titled *Sounding the Tones of the Melody of Auspiciousness*.

The text was printed in woodblock at the renowned monastery of Mindroling, founded by the great tertön Terdak Lingpa, and seat of the Minling Trichen, supreme head of the Nyingma lineage.

Translated into English for the first time in this book, the prophecy of Chogyur Lingpa is cherished by the Kagyu lineage as a sacred document indicating the qualities and activities of the future Karmapas. A photograph of the entire woodblock text of *Sounding the Tones of the Melody of Auspiciousness* appears at right. Photographs of the individual pages concerning the prophecy of the Karmapas accompany the translation, illustrated by the corresponding sections of Karmai Khenchen's painting. Note that certain details in the text refer to "right" and "left" as understood from the point of view of Guru Rinpoche, who spoke the words of the sacred prophecy.





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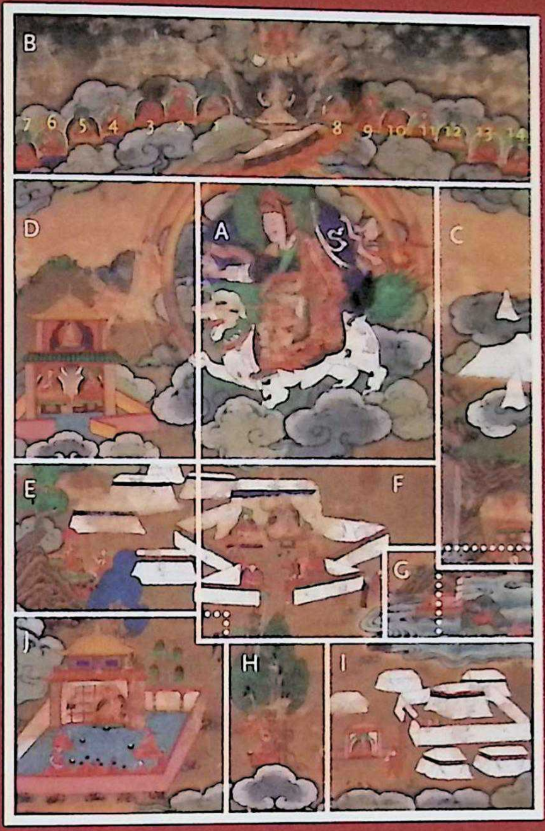


A Guru Rinpoche

B First fourteen Karmapas

  1 Dusum Khyenpa
  2 Karma Pakshi
  3 Rangjung Dorje
  4 Rolpe Dorje
  5 Deshin Shekpa
  6 Thongwa Donden
  7 Chödrak Gyatso
  8 Mikyö Dorje
  9 Wangchuk Dorje
  10 Chöying Dorje
  11 Yeshe Dorje
  12 Changchub Dorje
  13 Dudul Dorje
  14 Tegchog Dorje

C Fifteenth Karmapa
Khakhyab Dorje

D Sixteenth Karmapa
Rangjung Rigpe Dorje

E Seventeenth Karmapa
Orgyen Trinley Dorje

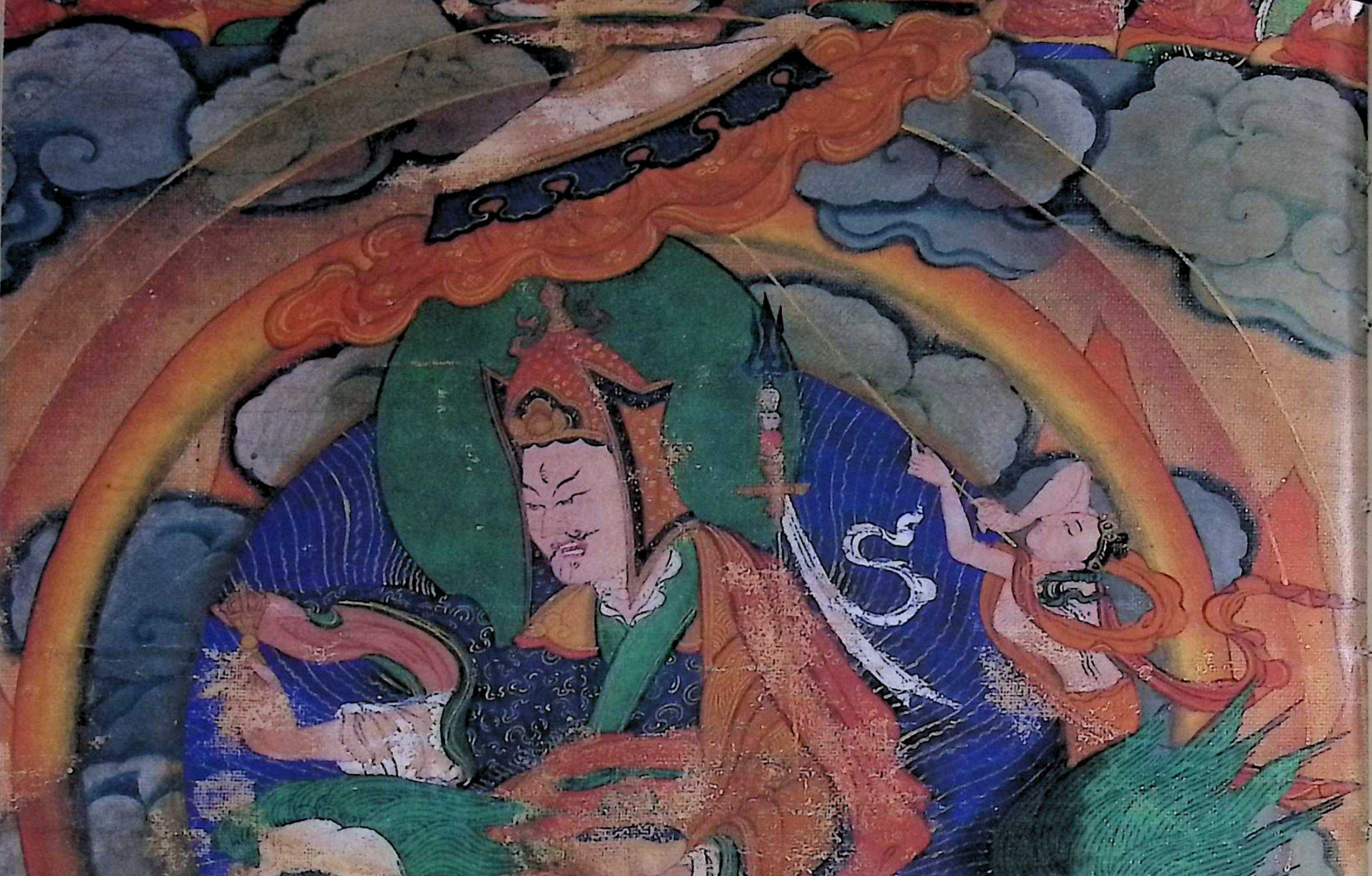
F Eighteenth incarnation with
disciples in a tent encampment

G Nineteenth incarnation
on a ship in the ocean

H Twentieth incarnation sitting
in the cool shade of lush trees

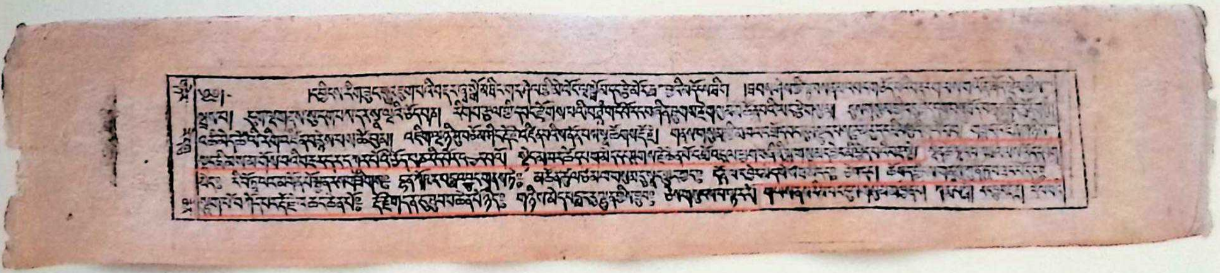
I Twenty-first incarnation seated
in a palanquin carried by monks

J The Doctrine of Vinaya



A

Guru Rinpoche



Amitabha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, the protector Chenrezig of Mount Potala, and Padmasambhava of Dhanakosha have previously manifested as three separate forms, but in truth they are indivisible and inseparable.

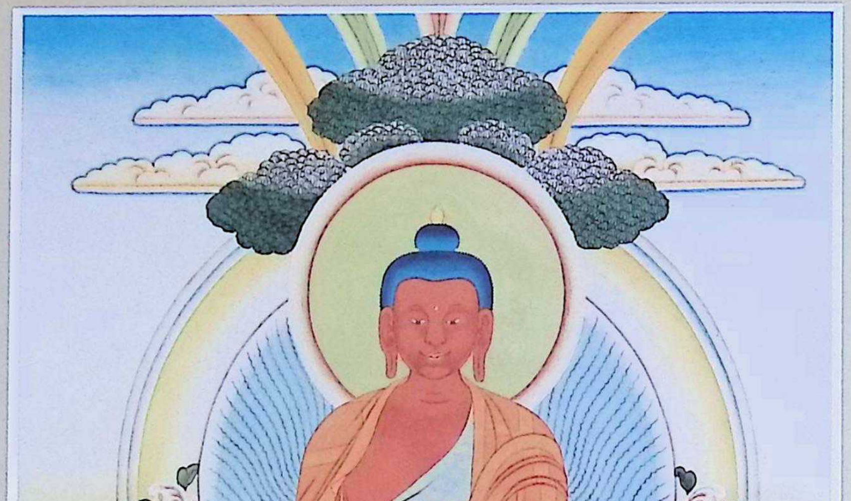
Kuntuzangpo in the Realm of Dharmadhatu, the great Dorje Chang in Tukpo Kupa, and the great Buddha Shakyamuni himself in Bodhgaya are indistinguishable and spontaneously present within Pema—myself.

Thus it was said by Guru Rinpoche.

སྔོན་ཆེ་སྣང་བ་མཐའ་ཡས་འོད་དཔག་མེད༔ རི་པོ་ཏ་ལར་མགོན་པོ་སྤྱན་རས་
གཟིགས༔ ཌྷ་ན་ཀོ་ཥར་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཏེ༔ མཚོན་ཚུལ་ཙམ་ལ་གསུམ་དུ་
སྣང་གྱུར་ཀྱང༔ བདེན་ལ་དབྱེར་མེད་སོ་སོ་ཐ་མི་དད༔ ཅེས་དང་། ཆོས་
དབྱིངས་གནས་སུ་ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ་དང༔ སྟུག་པོ་བཀོད་པར་རྡོ་རྗེ་འཆང་ཆེན་པོ༔
རྡོ་རྗེ་གདན་དུ་ཐུབ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་ཉིད༔ གཉིས་མེད་པདྨ་ང་རུ་ལྷུན་གྱིས་གྲུབ༔
ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར་རོ།

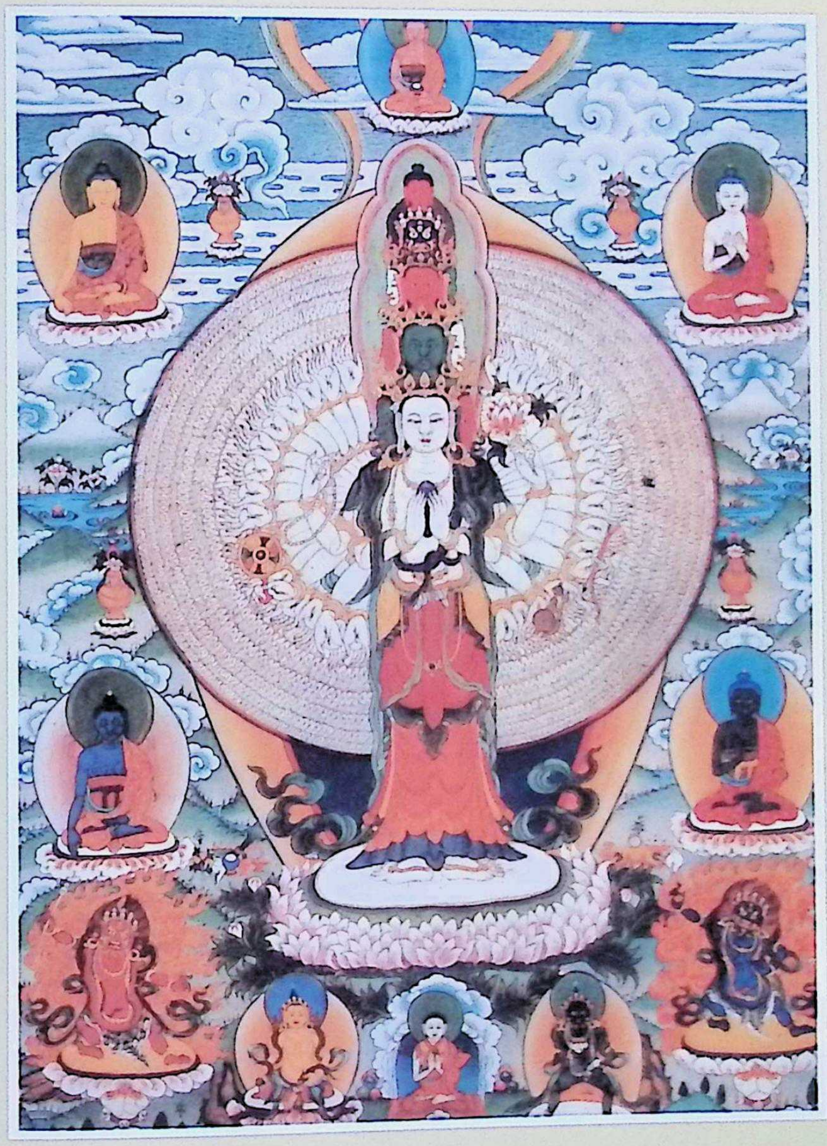
The following pages contain images of the six figures mentioned above.

Amitabha the Buddha of Limitless Light



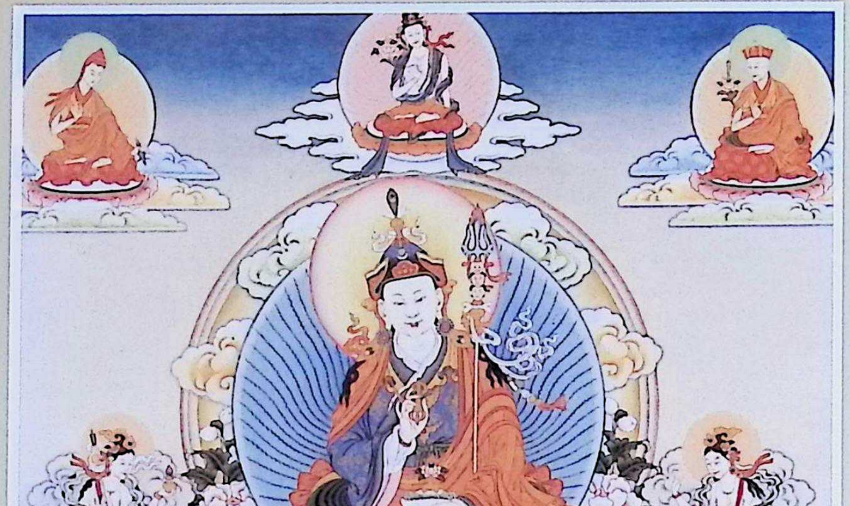
Buddha Amitabha is the embodiment of the speech of all the *buddhas* and of their loving attachment to the limitless numbers of sentient beings who wander helplessly through the different realms of *samsara*. He is the *buddha* of the Western Paradise, which is known as Dewachen.

Chenrezig the Bodhisattva of Compassion



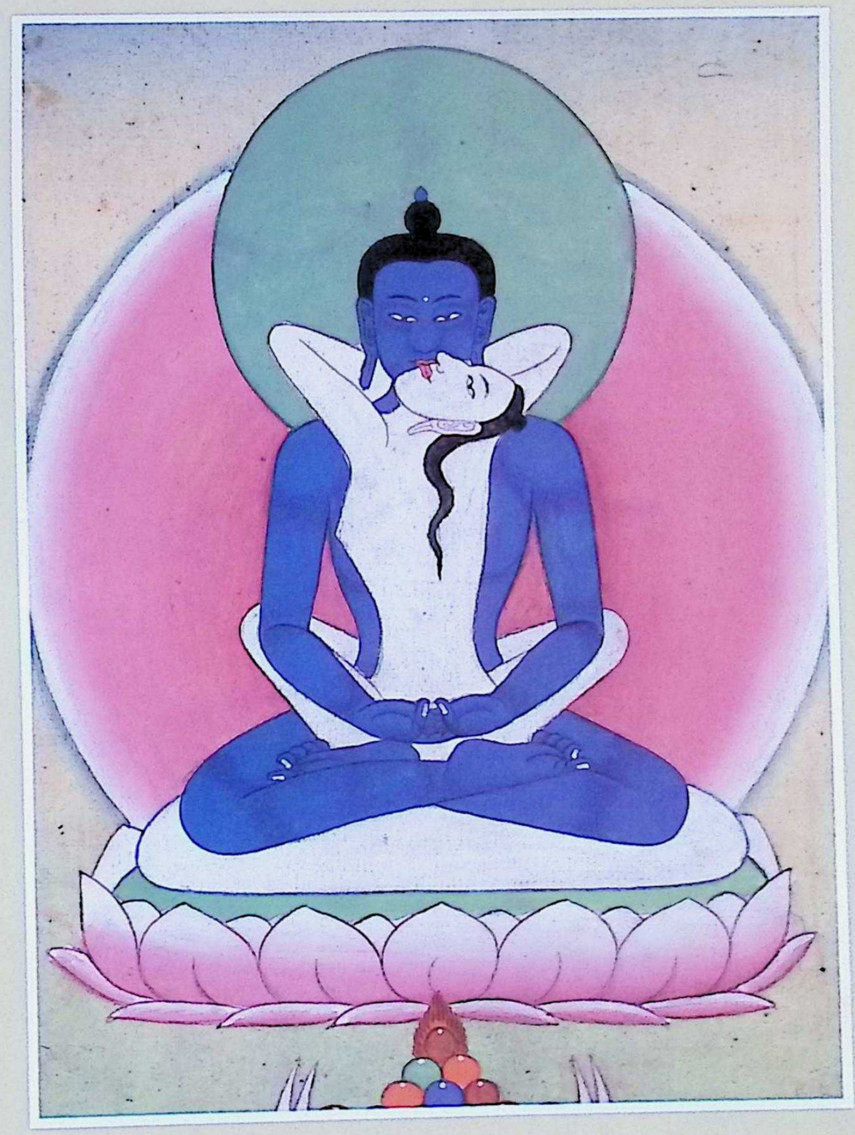
In order to liberate beings from suffering, Chenrezig emanates in countless ways as the manifestation of compassion. In this form, he appears with eleven faces and one thousand hands possessing one thousand eyes, which symbolize the one thousand *buddhas* of this fortunate eon.

Guru Rinpoche



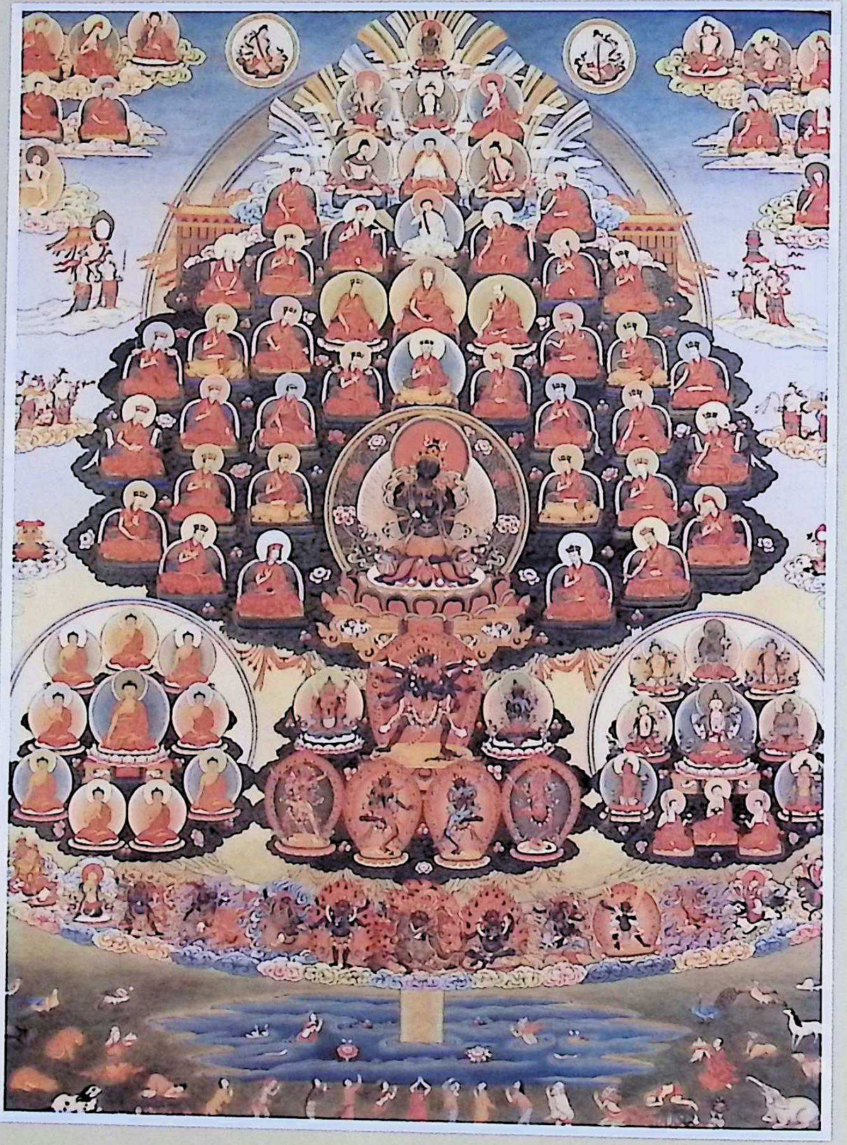
Lord Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche, was born miraculously in a lotus flower on the Dhanakosha Lake in the country of Orgyen. An emanation of Chenrezig, he showed the way to attain enlightenment through relying on human teachers. At the invitation of the Dharma king Trisong Detsen and the abbot Shantarakshita, he established the Dharma in Tibet during the eighth century. Immortal, he resides in the Pure Land known as the Glorious Copper-colored Mountain.

Kuntuzangpo, the Dharmakaya of All the Buddhas



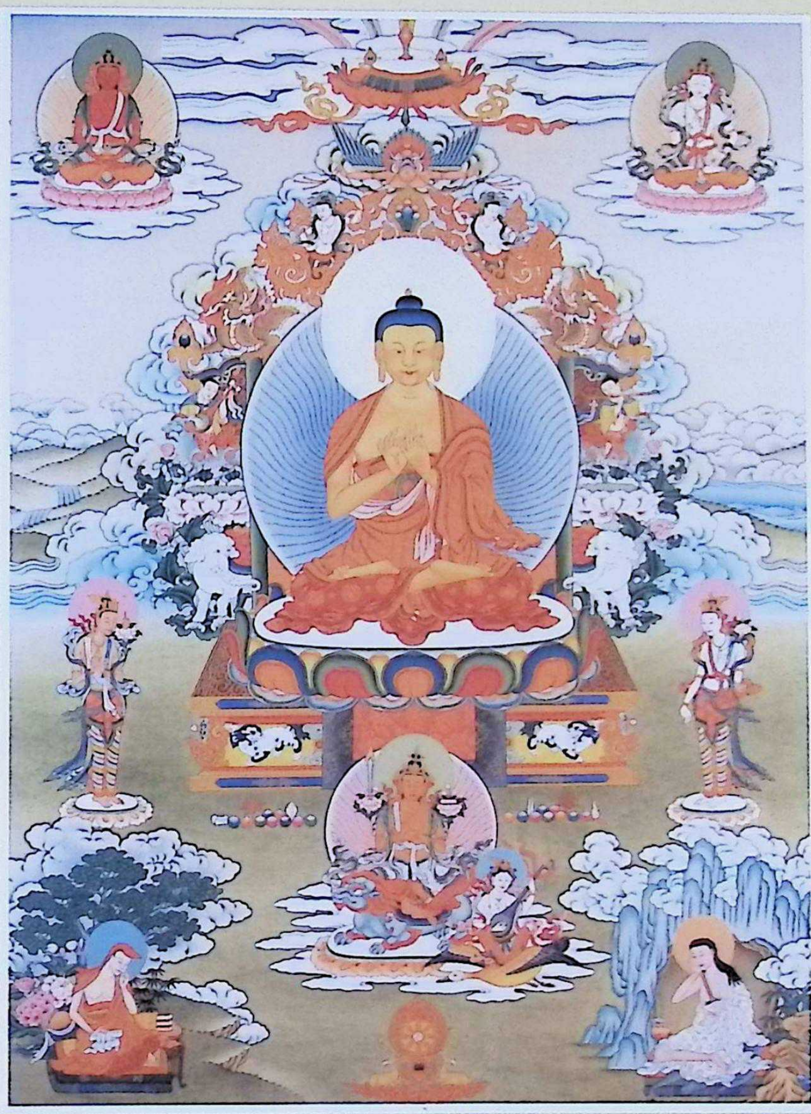
The *dharmakaya* of the Buddha represents *buddha* nature, the Buddha's primordial, unchanging essence, which is the basis of the consciousness of all beings. When recognized, *buddha* nature is the basis of freedom without limitation. When not recognized, it is the basis of all worldly experience within the endless cycle of happiness and suffering.

The Primordial Buddha, Dorje Chang

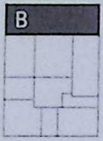


Dorje Chang, seated in the midst of the Karma Kagyu Tree of Refuge, embodies all aspects of all the *buddhas*. His body represents the *nirmanakaya*. The ornaments adorning him represent the *sambhogakaya*. His blue color represents the *dharmakaya*. In his hands, the *vajra* represents *method* and the bell symbolizes *wisdom*. The image of Dorje Chang embracing the *vajra* and bell represents the union of all three *kayas*, *method*, and *wisdom*.

Buddha Shakyamuni



Buddha Shakyamuni is the historically renowned *buddha* who attained enlightenment more than twenty-five hundred years ago beneath the sacred *bodhi* tree at the holy seat of Bodhgaya, India. His activity during his lifetime and his manifestations after his *parinirvana* all express the primordial, supreme qualities inherent in all sentient beings.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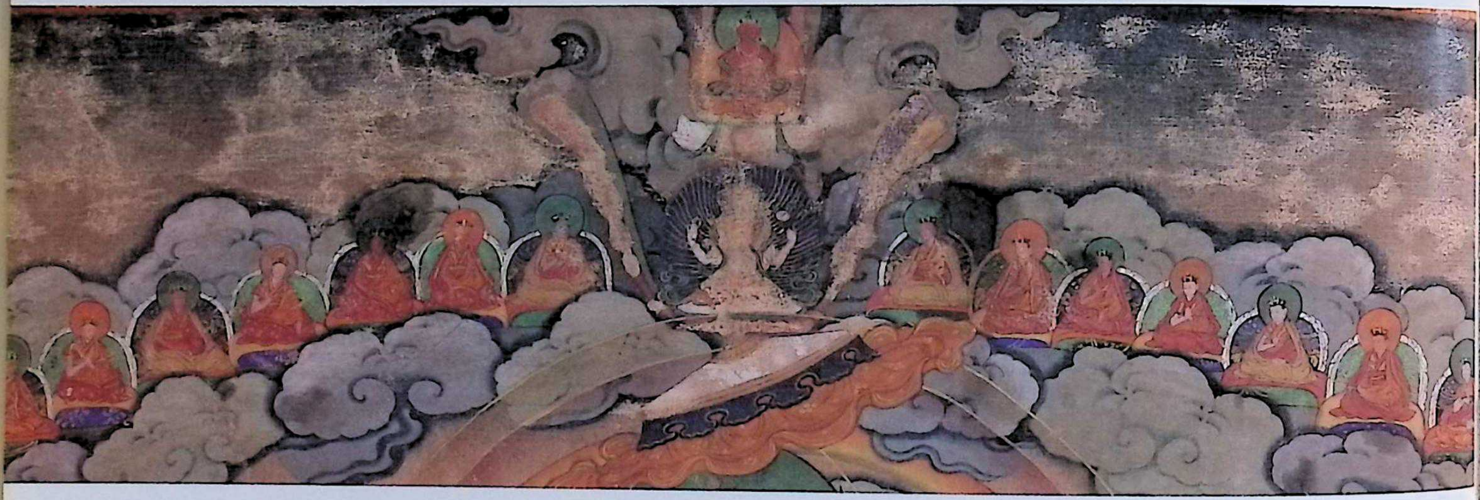
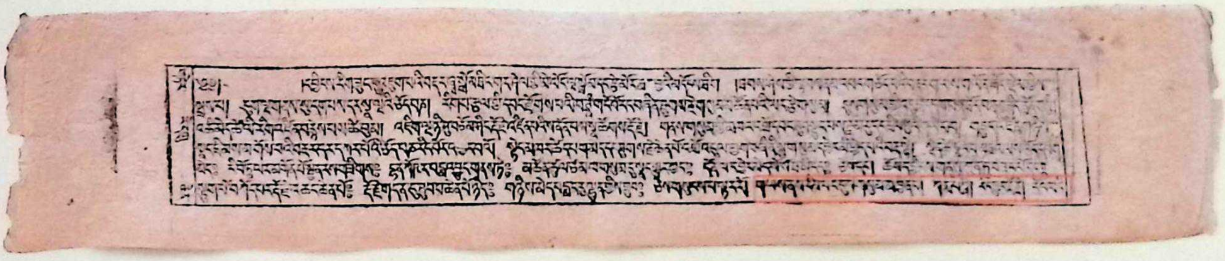
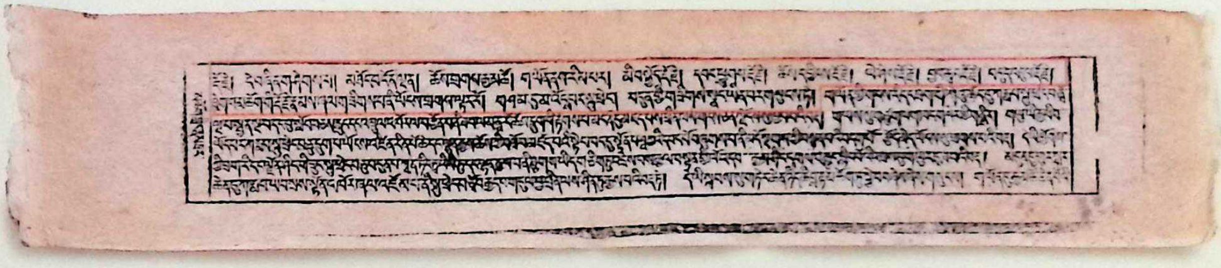


First Fourteen Karmapas

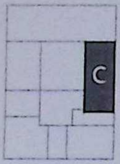




To the right in succession are Dusum Khyenpa, Karma Pakshi, Rangjung Dorje, Rolpe Dorje, Deshin Shekpa, Thongwa Donden and Chödrak Gyatso. To the left in succession are Mikyö Dorje, Wangchuk Dorje, Chöying Dorje, Yeshe Dorje, Changchub Dorje, Dudul Dorje, and Tegchog Dorje, all appearing as they are historically renowned.

Below are the visions of the future seven incarnations.

གཡས་ནས་རིམ་པར་དུས་གསུམ་མཁྱེན་པ། ཀརྨ་པཀྴི། རང་བྱུང་རྡོ་རྗེ།
རོལ་པའི་རྡོ་རྗེ། དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ། མཐོང་བ་དོན་ལྡན། ཆོས་གྲགས་
རྒྱ་མཚོ། གཡོན་ནས་རིམ་པར། མི་བསྐྱོད་རྡོ་རྗེ། དབང་ཕྱུག་རྡོ་རྗེ།
ཆོས་དབྱིངས་རྡོ་རྗེ། ཡེ་ཤེས་རྡོ་རྗེ། བྱང་ཆུབ་རྡོ་རྗེ། བདུད་འདུལ་རྡོ་རྗེ།
ཐེག་པ་མཆོག་གི་རྡོ་རྗེ་རྣམས་ཞལ་གཟིགས་པ་ནི་ཡོངས་གྲགས་ལྟར་རོ།
གཤམ་དུ་མ་འོངས་པར་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་། བདུན་གྱི་གཟིགས་སྣང་ཡིན་པར་གསུངས་ཏེ།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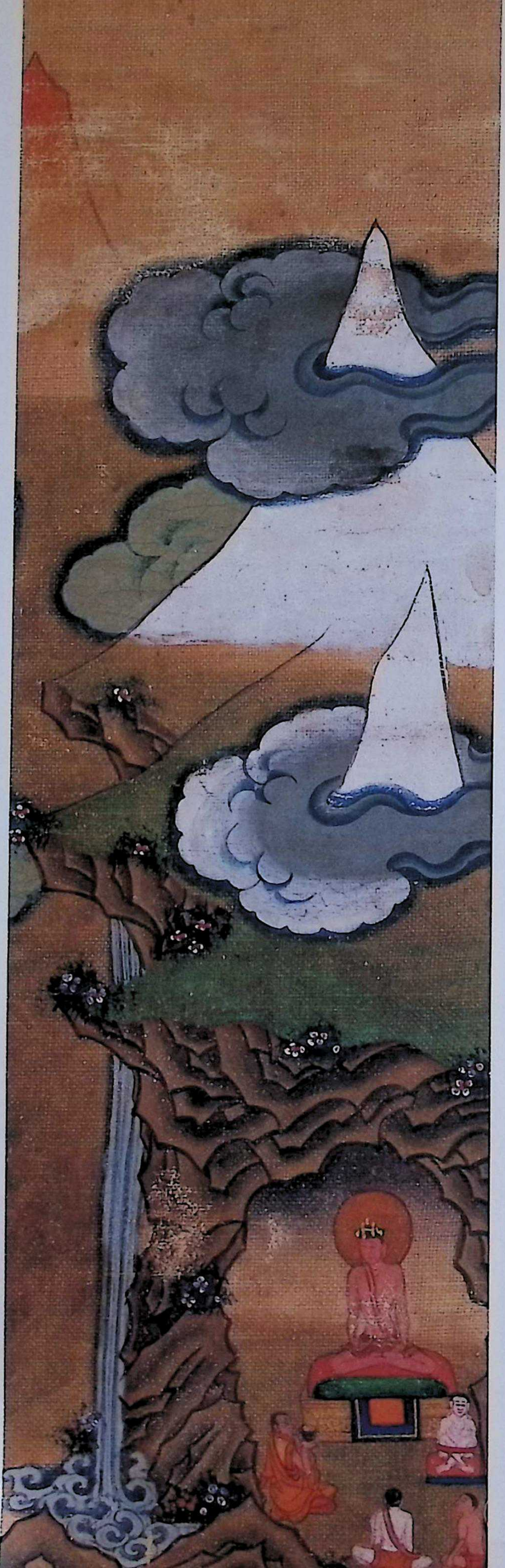
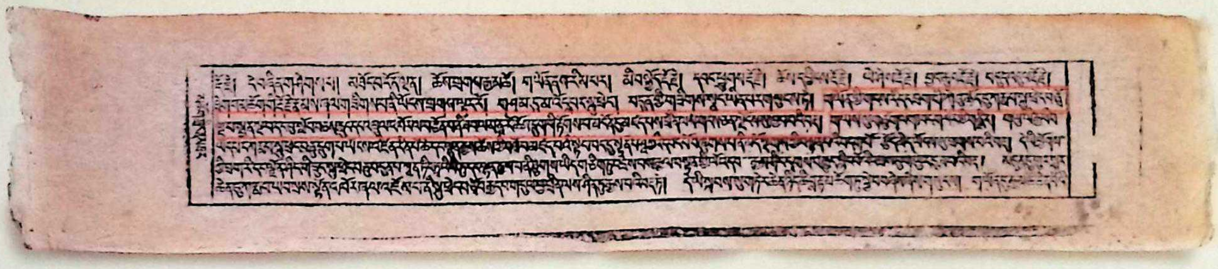
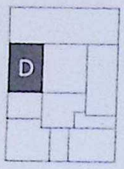


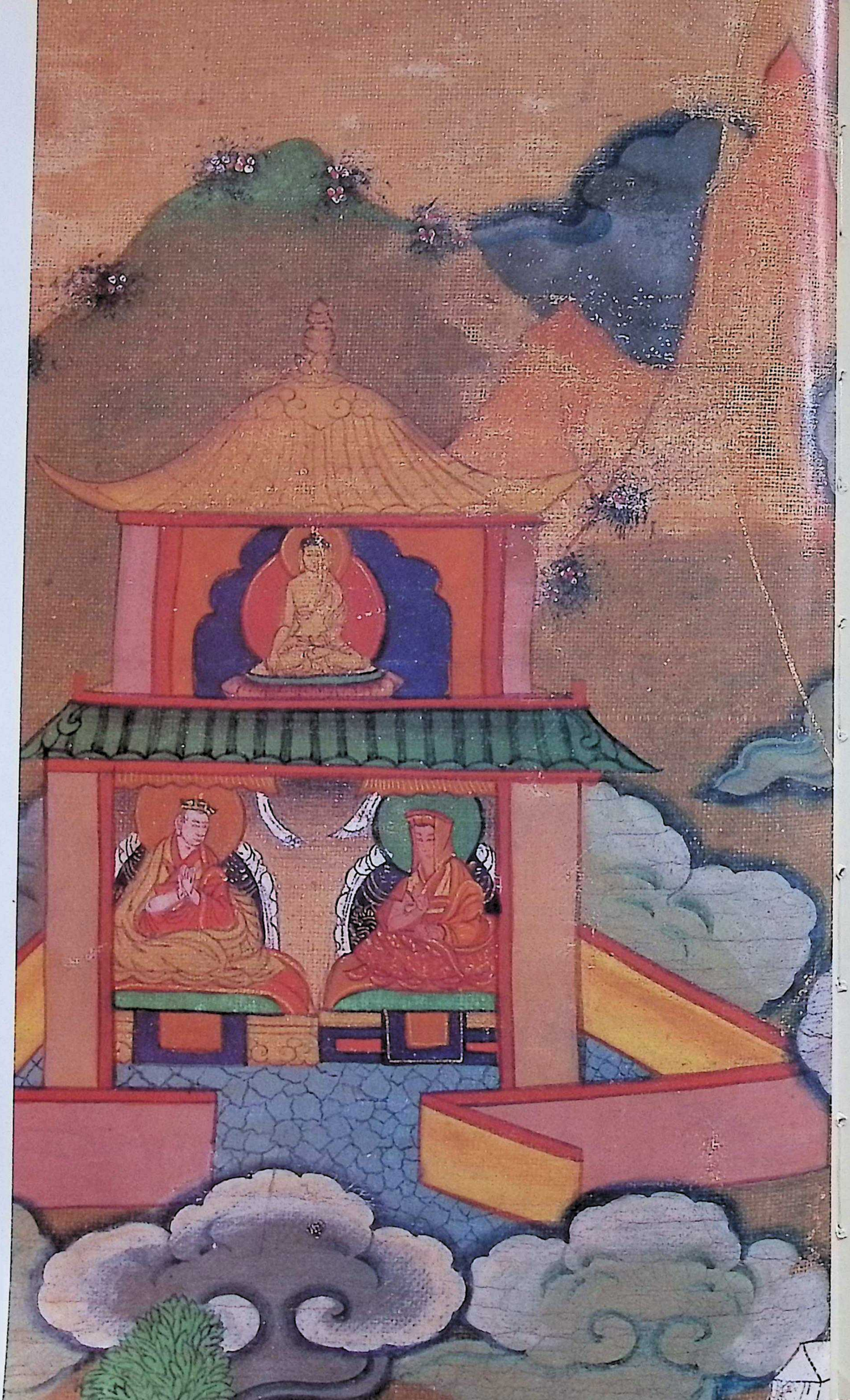
Khakhyab Dorje



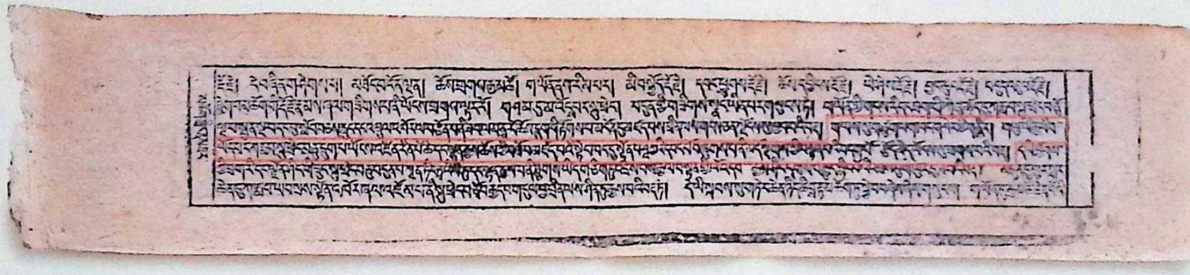
On the left, in a rock cave in a snow mountain, is the Fifteenth Karmapa, together with his attendant and disciples, exerting themselves in sacred *tantric* yoga practices. By virtue of his realization, born through practicing the *Six Yogas of Naropa*, his activity will extend throughout the Land of Snows.

གཡོན་གྱི་གངས་རི་དང་བྲག་གི་ཀེའུ་ཚང་དུ་ཀརྨ་པ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བ་བཅོ་ལྔ་པ་སྐུན་ལྔ་བ་དང་བུ་སློབ་བཅས་རླུང་དང་འཕྲུལ་འཁོར་ལ་བརྩོན་པ་ནི་ཟབ་ལམ་ནཱ་རོ་ཆོས་དྲུག་གི་རྟོགས་པ་སྟོན་དུ་མཛད་པས་ཕྲིན་ལས་གངས་ཅན་ལྗོངས་སུ་ཁྱབ་པའི་བརྡ།


D

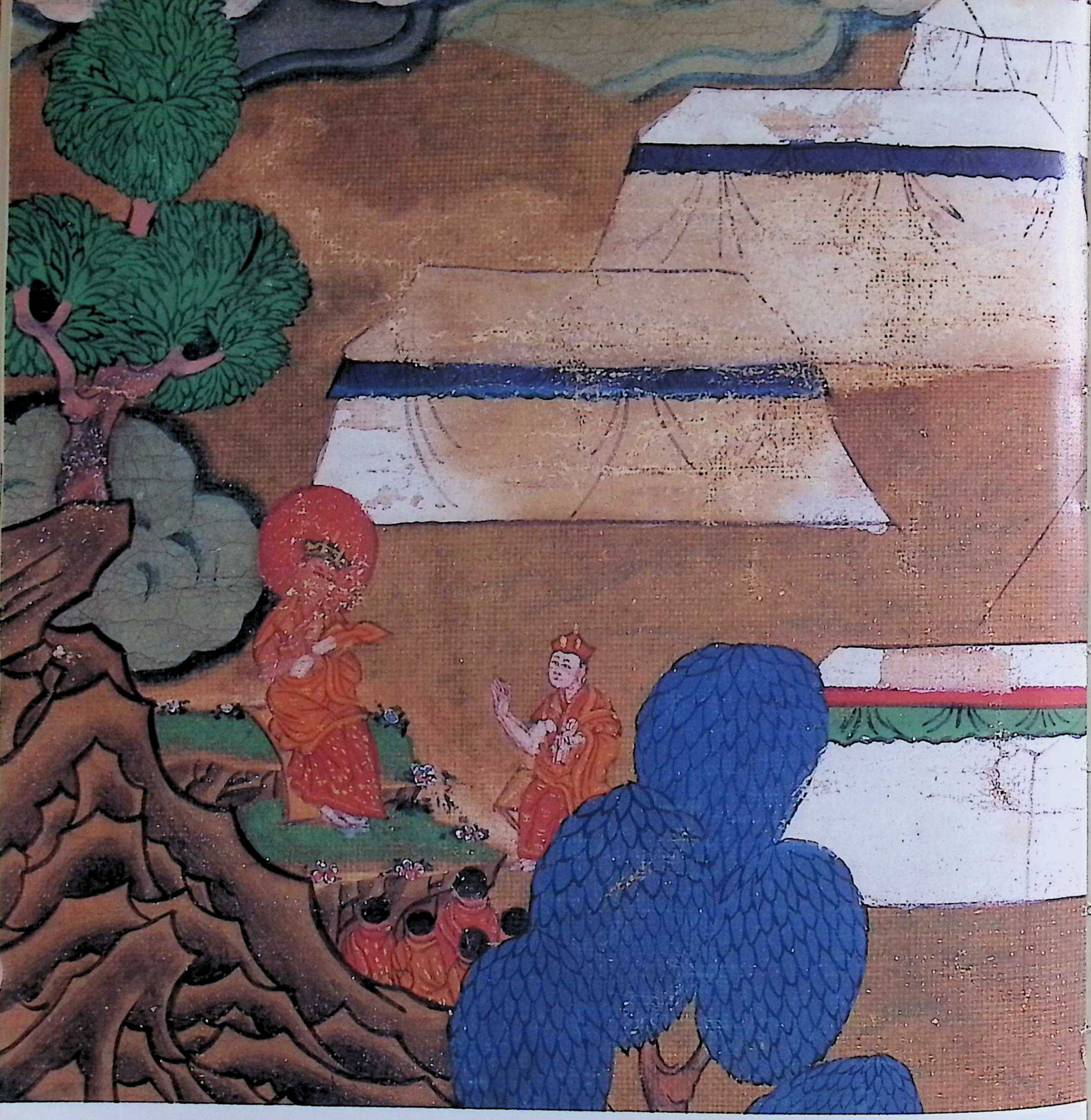


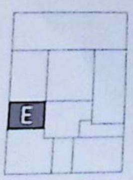
Rangjung Rigpe Dorje



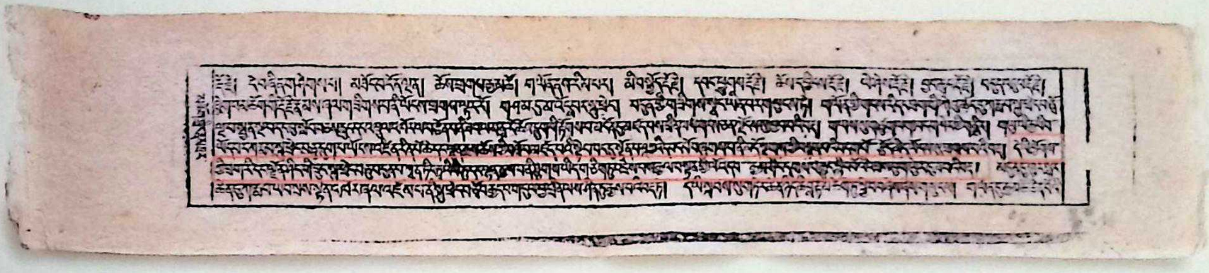
On the right, in a sacred temple with a golden pinnacle and turquoise pagoda roof, the Sixteenth Karmapa discusses the Dharma with his tutor. On the upper floor is the Lord Buddha Shakyamuni. These images signify that he will attain universal renown as the indisputable lord of the doctrine of the *sutras* and *tantras*.

གཡས་སུ་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་གསེར་གྱི་གཉྫི་ར།   གཡུ་ཡི་རྒྱ་ཕིབ་ཡོད་པར་ཀརྨ་པ་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བཅུ་དྲུག་པ་ཡོངས་འཛིན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དང་ལྷན་རྒྱས་ཆོས་ཀྱི་བགྲོ་བ་མཛད་པའི་སྟེང་ཁང་དུ་སྟོན་པ་ཤཱཀྱའི་དབང་པོ་བཞུགས་པ་ནི་མདོ་སྔགས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པའི་བདག་པོ་རྩོད་མེད་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲགས་པའི་བརྡ།



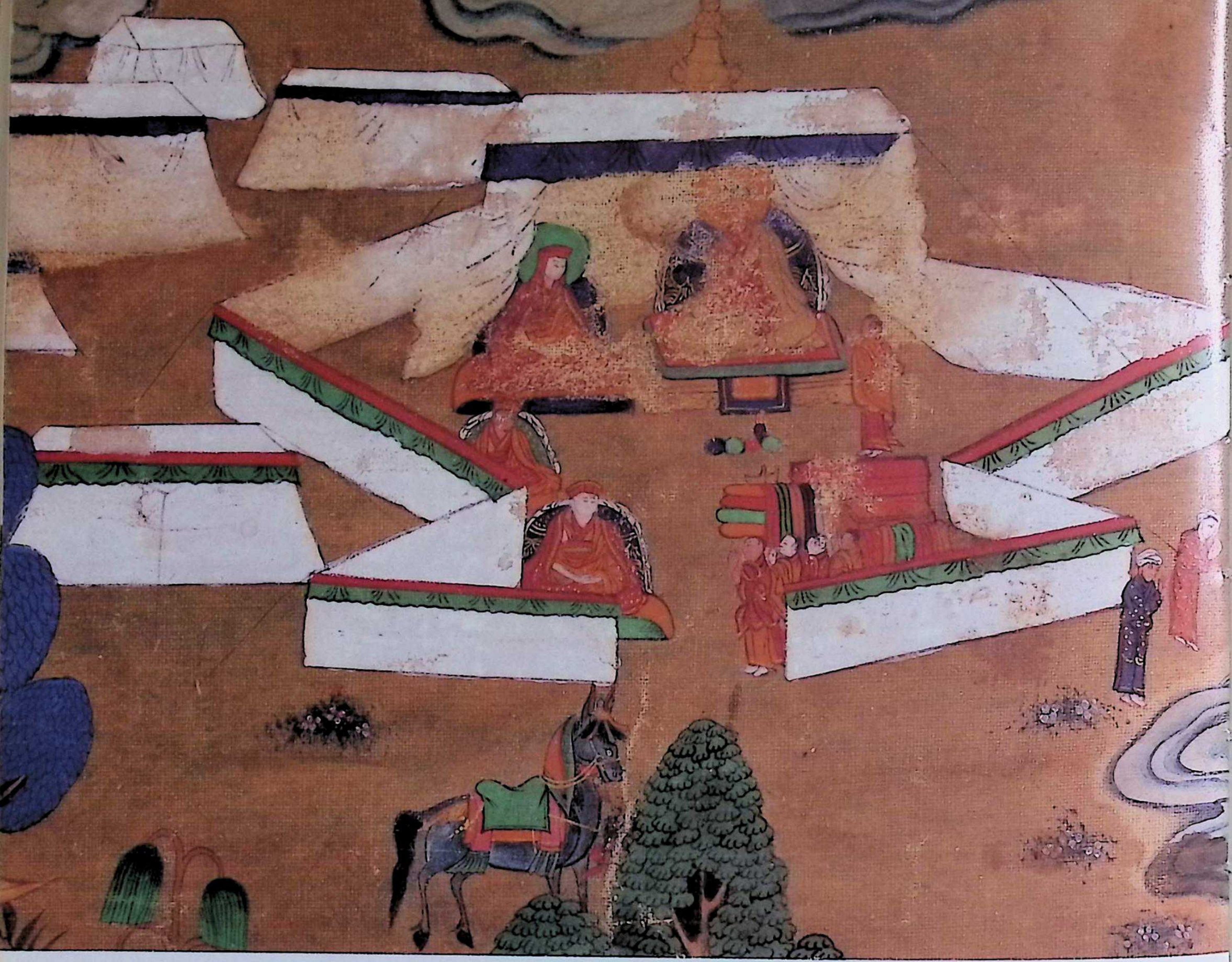

E

Orgyen Trinley Dorje



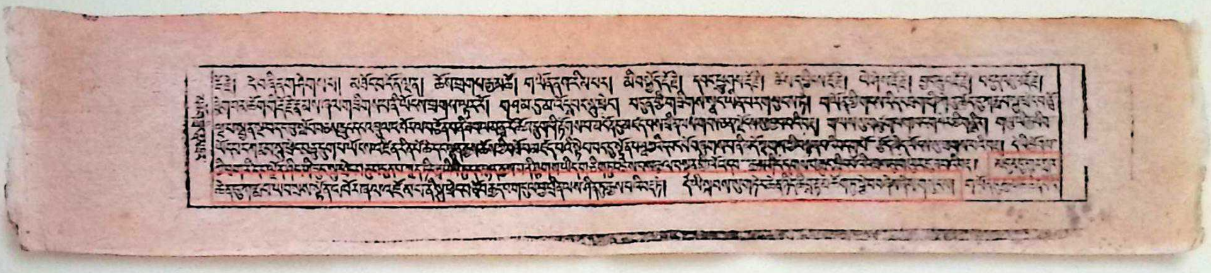
Nearby, at the foot of a lush tree on a rock mountain, is the seventeenth incarnation together with Khentin Tai Situpa. This image symbolizes that, through the unity of their minds, the tree of the Buddha's doctrine will flourish, laden with the ripe fruit which is the essence of the teachings of the lineage of Gampopa.

དེ་ཡི་ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་བྲག་རི་དང་ལྗོན་ཤིང་གི་དྲུང་སྐུ་ཕྲེང་བཅུ་བདུན་པ་ཀུན་ཏིང་ཏཱའི་སི་ཏུ་དང་ལྷན་རྒྱས་པ་ནི་ཐུགས་ཡིད་གཅིག་ཏུ་འདྲིས་པས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་གྱི་ལོ་འདབ་རྒྱས་ཤིང་དྭགས་བརྒྱུད་སྙིང་པོའི་འབྲས་བུ་གཡུར་དུ་ཟ་བའི་བརྡ།



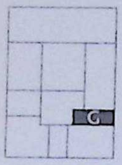
F

Eighteenth Karmapa



In front, in a vast tent encampment, are the Karmapa and disciples, surrounded by a retinue of followers. This is a sign of the tremendous increase in disciples and activity of the eighteenth incarnation. Chogyur Lingpa declared that he himself would take birth at that time as the celestial horse of the Eighteenth Karmapa.

མདུན་དུ་གུར་སྒར་ཆེན་དུ་ཀརྨ་པ་ཡབ་སྲས་སྐོན་འཁོར་ཞལ་འཛོམ་པ་ནི་སྐུ་ཕྲིང་བཅོ་བརྒྱད་པ་གདུལ་བྱ་ཕྲིན་ལས་ཤིན་ཏུ་རྒྱས་པའི་བརྡ་དེ། དེ་ཡི་སྐབས་སུ་གཏེར་ཆེན་ཉིད་ཆིབས་རྟ་མཆོག་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་བ་བཞེས་ཞེས་གསུངས།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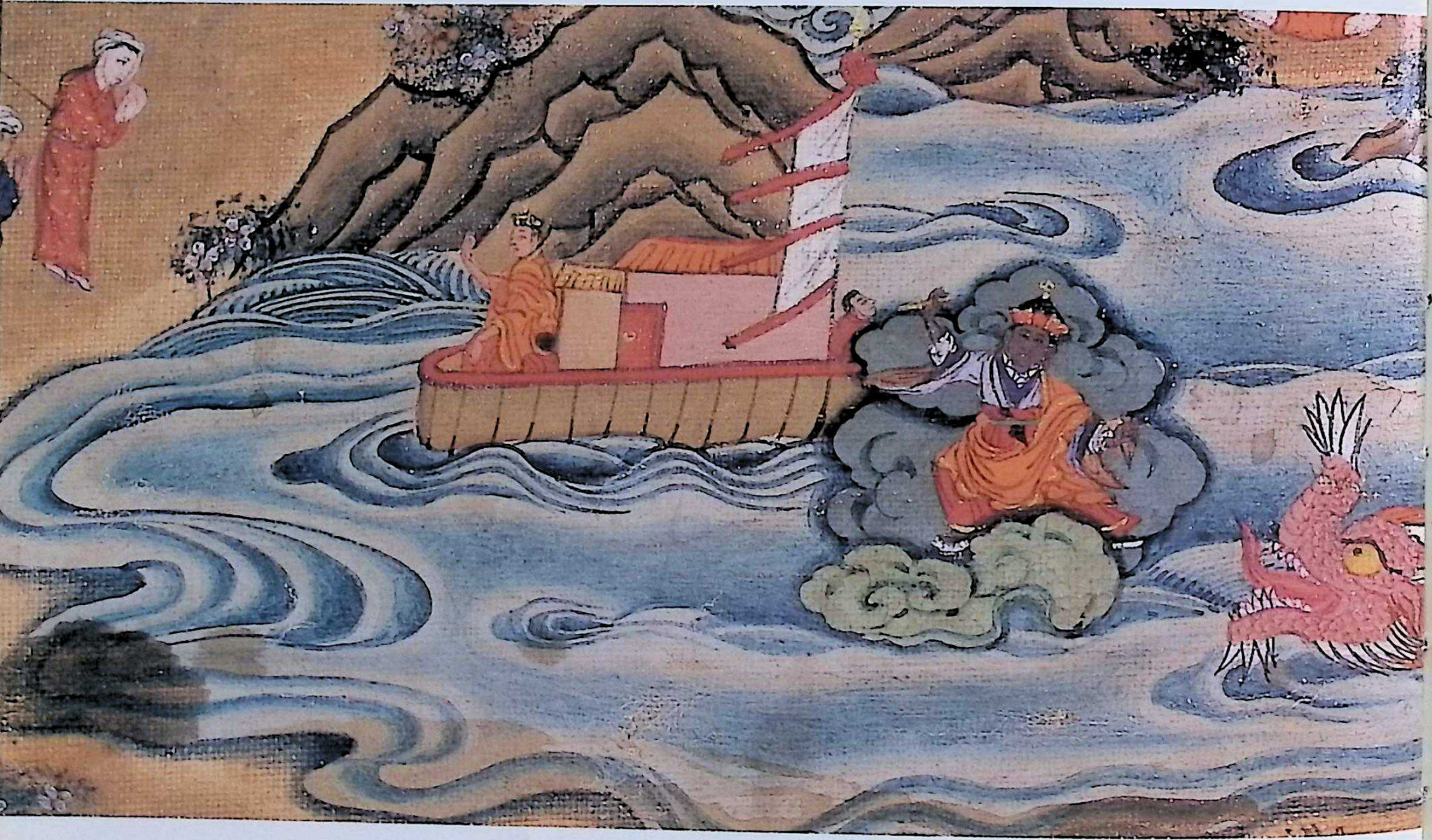
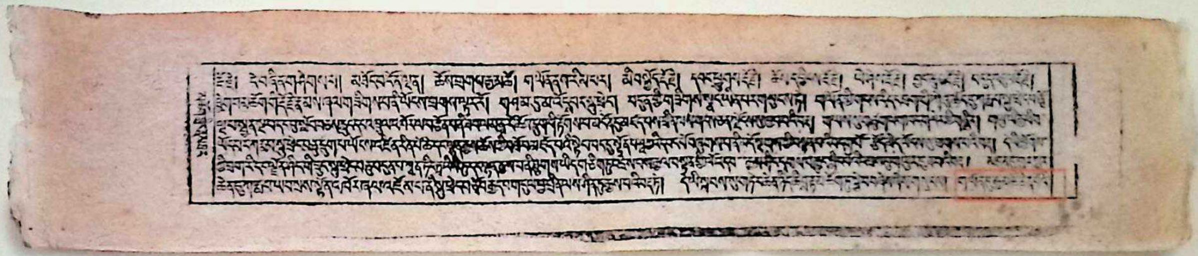
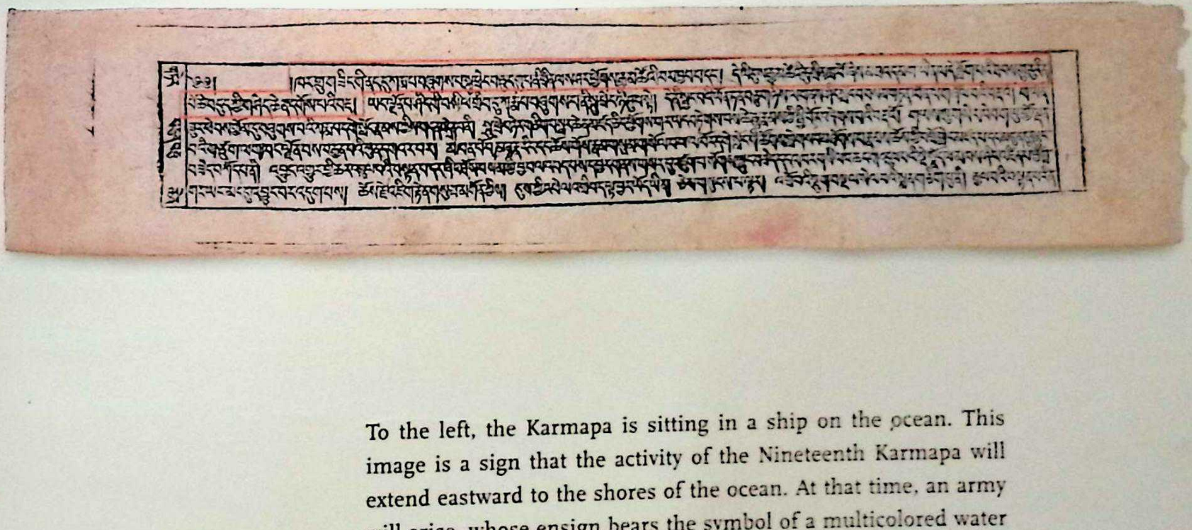


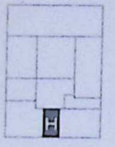
Nineteenth Karmapa

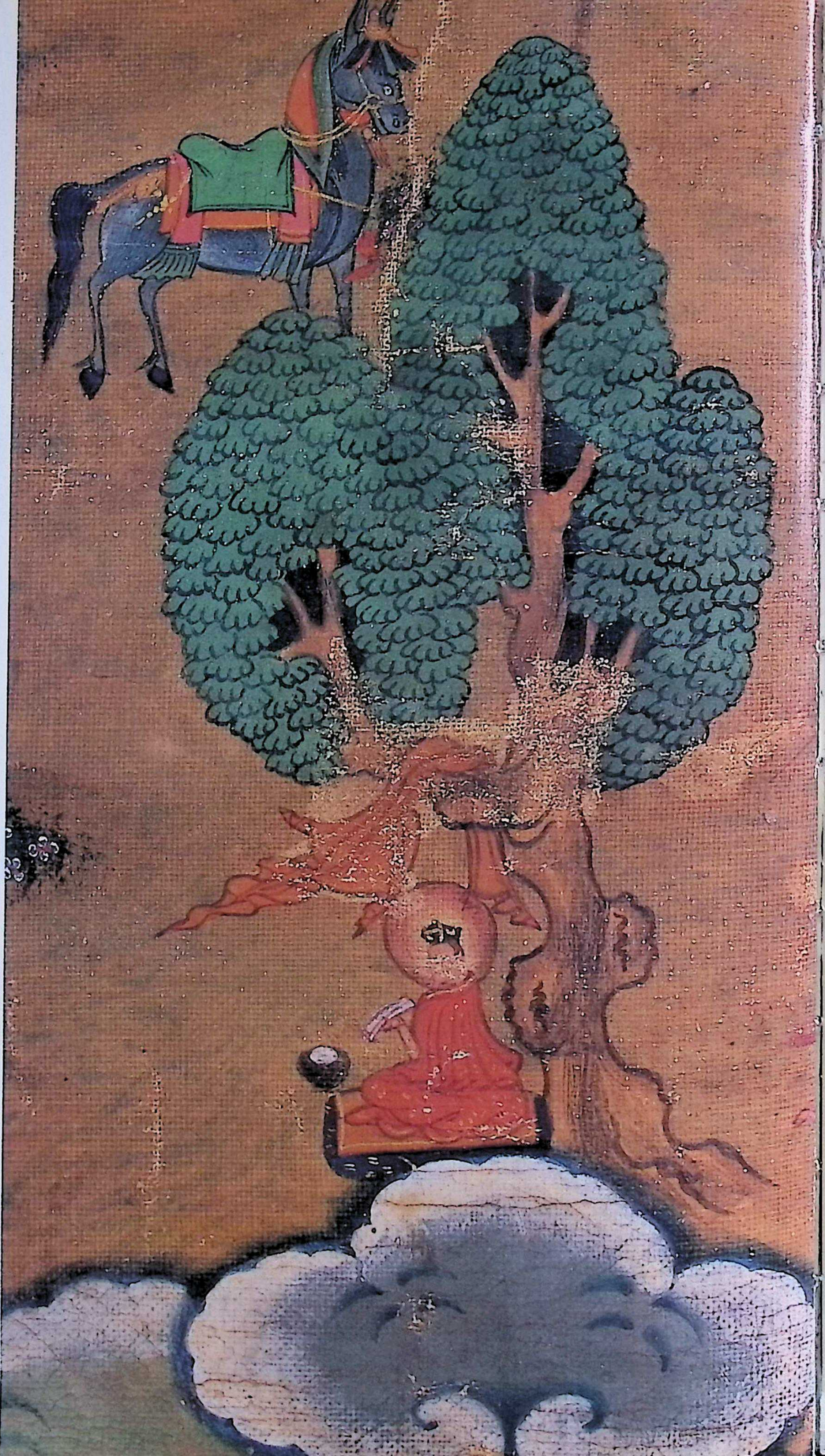




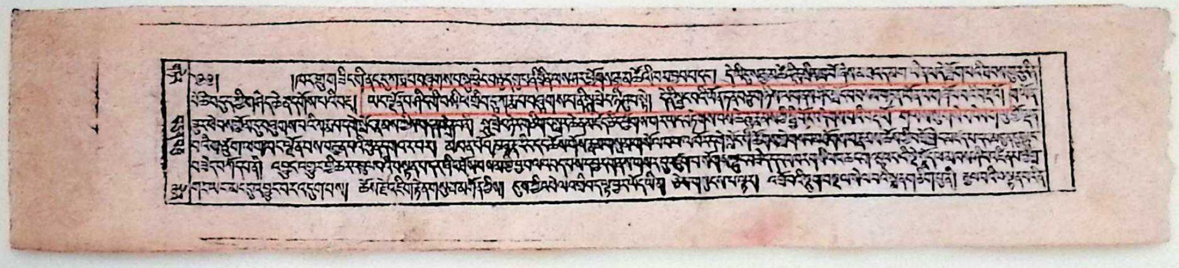
To the left, the Karmapa is sitting in a ship on the ocean. This image is a sign that the activity of the Nineteenth Karmapa will extend eastward to the shores of the ocean. At that time, an army will arise, whose ensign bears the symbol of a multicolored water monster, which must be conquered by the Great Subduer of the *Maras*, Guru Rinpoche.

གཡོན་དུ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ཆེན་པོའི་ཁར་གྲུ་གཟིང་གི་ནང་དུ་ཀརྨ་པ་བཞུགས་པ་སྣ་ཕྱིར་བཅུ་དགུ་པ་ནི་ཕྲིན་ལས་ཤར་ཕྱོགས་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཁར་ཁྱབ་པ་དང་། དེ་ཡི་དུས་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཆུ་སྲིན་ཁྲ་བོ་ཞིག་མཐའ་དམག་ཡིན་ལ་དེ་ཟློག་པའི་ཐབས་གུ་རུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་བདུད་ཀྱི་གཤེད་ཆེན་དགོས་པའི་བརྡ།



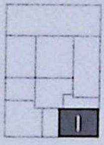


Twentieth Karmapa



The twentieth incarnation is sitting in the cool shade of lush trees. This image symbolizes that he will abide according to the *12 principles of spiritual practice of simplicity*, and that he will devote himself solely to the practice of meditation.

ཡང་ལྗོན་པ་ཤིང་གི་བསིལ་གྲིབ་དུ་ཀརྨ་པ་བཞུགས་པ་ནི་སྐུ་སྲིད་ཉི་ཤུ་པ་སྟེ། དེ་ནི་སྦྱང་བའི་ཡོན་ཏན་བཅུ་གཉིས་ལ་གནས་ཤིང་སྒོང་བ་བསམ་གཏན་ཁོ་ན་ལ་གཞོལ་བའི་བརྡའོ།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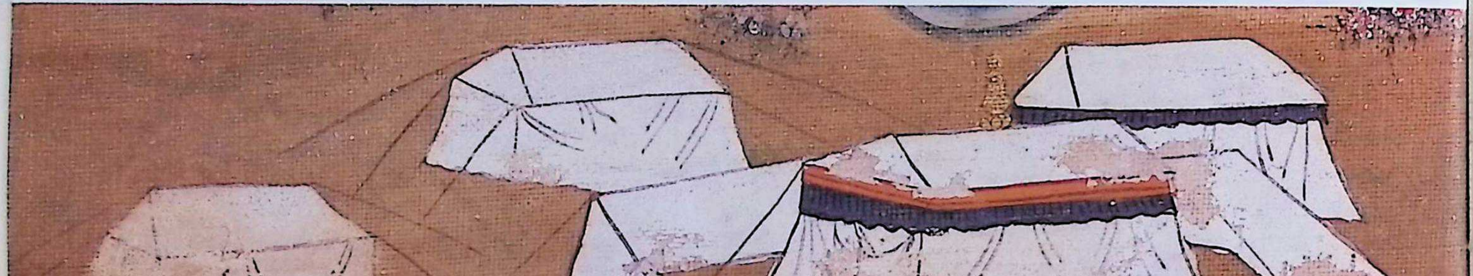
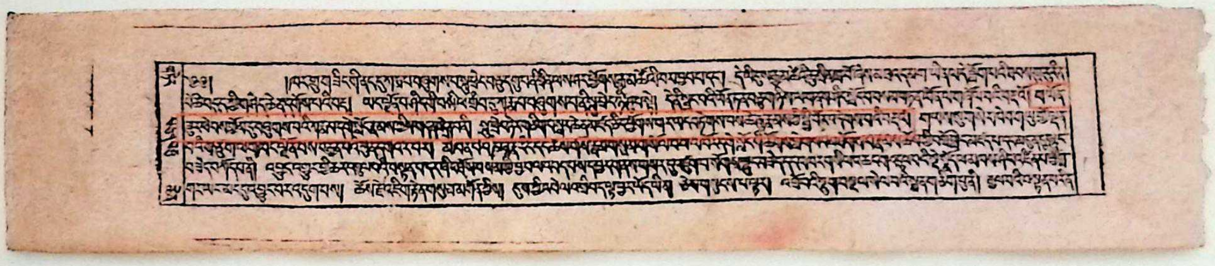
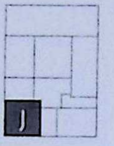


Twenty-First Karmapa



In the left corner, the twenty-first incarnation is seated in a palanquin carried by fully-ordained monks. This image symbolizes that he will travel extensively, making great tent encampments. Wherever he goes, he will be venerated by great beings who will touch the crowns of their heads to his feet.

གཡོན་ཟུར་ཕེབས་སྒྲོམ་དུ་བཞུགས་པའི་ཀརྨ་པ་དགེ་སློང་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་གདན་འདྲེན་པ་ནི། སྐུ་ཕྲེང་ཉེར་གཅིག་པ་སྒར་ཆེན་མཛད་ཅིང་ཕྱོགས་གར་ཡང་བཏེགས་པས་ཆེ་དགུ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་སྤྱི་བོར་འདེགས་པའི་བརྡའོ།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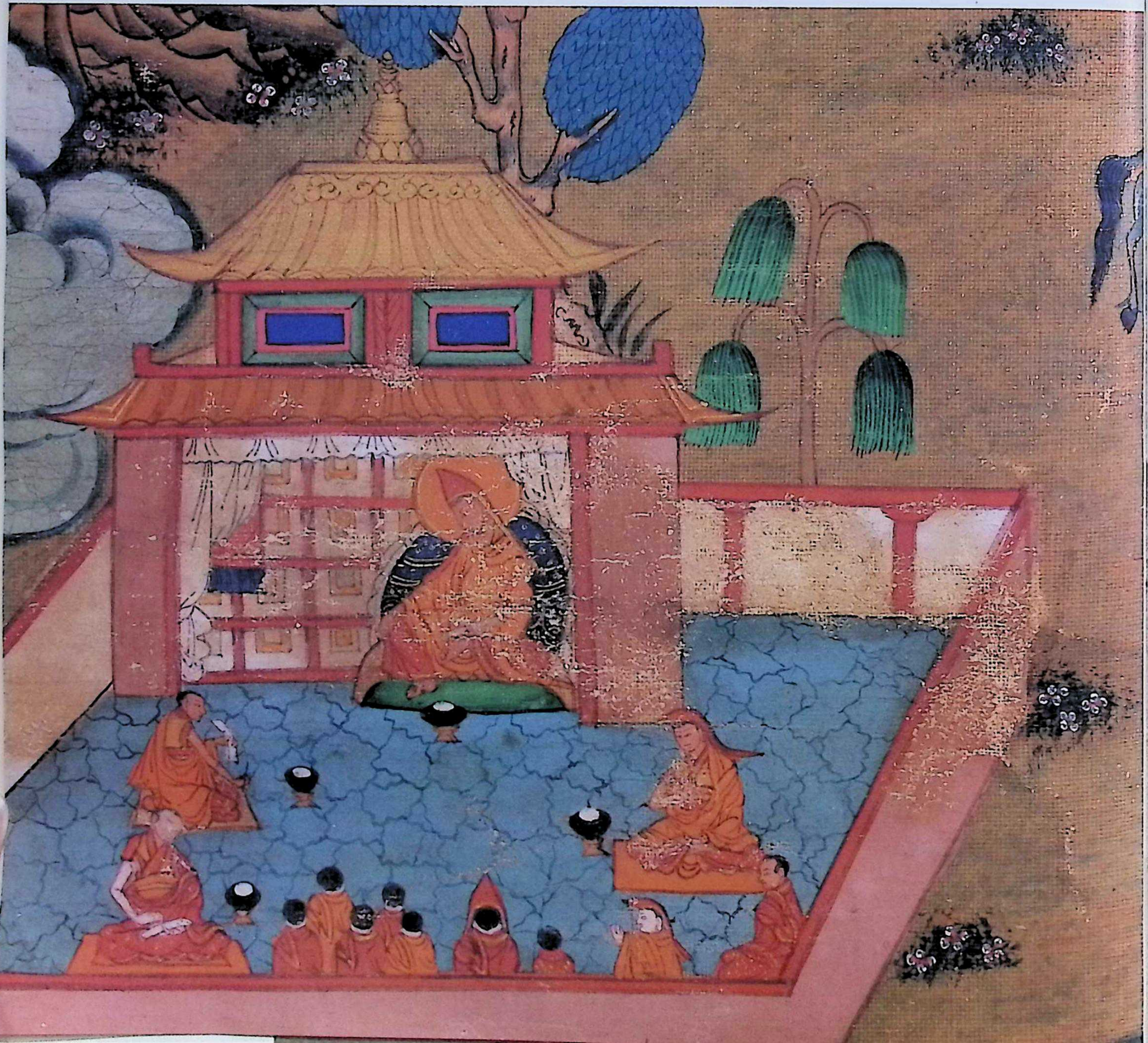
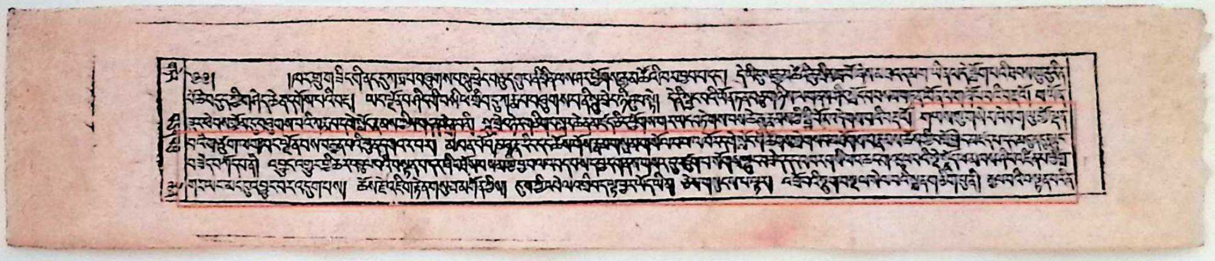
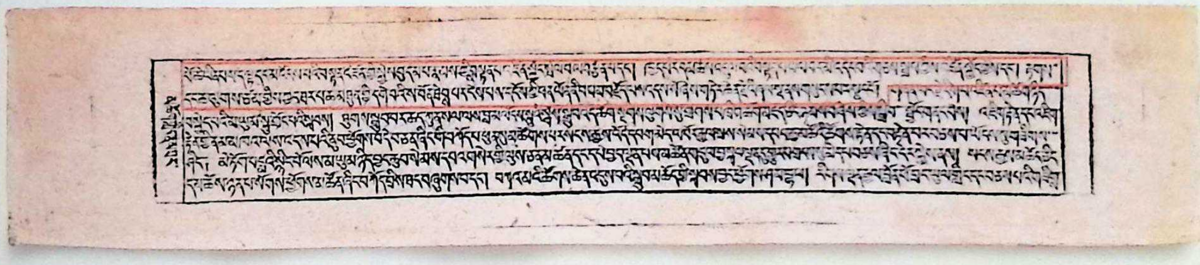


The Doctrine of the Vinaya





On the right, in a sacred temple with a golden roof and turquoise tiles, in a monastic garden adorned with lush trees, is an abbot wearing a pundit's hat with long ear flaps and the three Dharma robes. His retinue of fully ordained monks hold Dharma books and discourse upon the Dharma. Their alms bowls are placed before them. Thus, the doctrine of *Vinaya* will flourish in the future, and through diligent study and contemplation, the tradition of *Yarnay* will be re-established. Those who hold the alms bowl and mendicant staff and are skilled in upholding the collection of teachings of the *Vinaya* will appear in great numbers in all directions.

In the words of the Dharma Lord Jikten Sumgon, the degeneration or the prosperity of the times is produced by our present actions. Just so, since the single medicine that dispels the suffering of

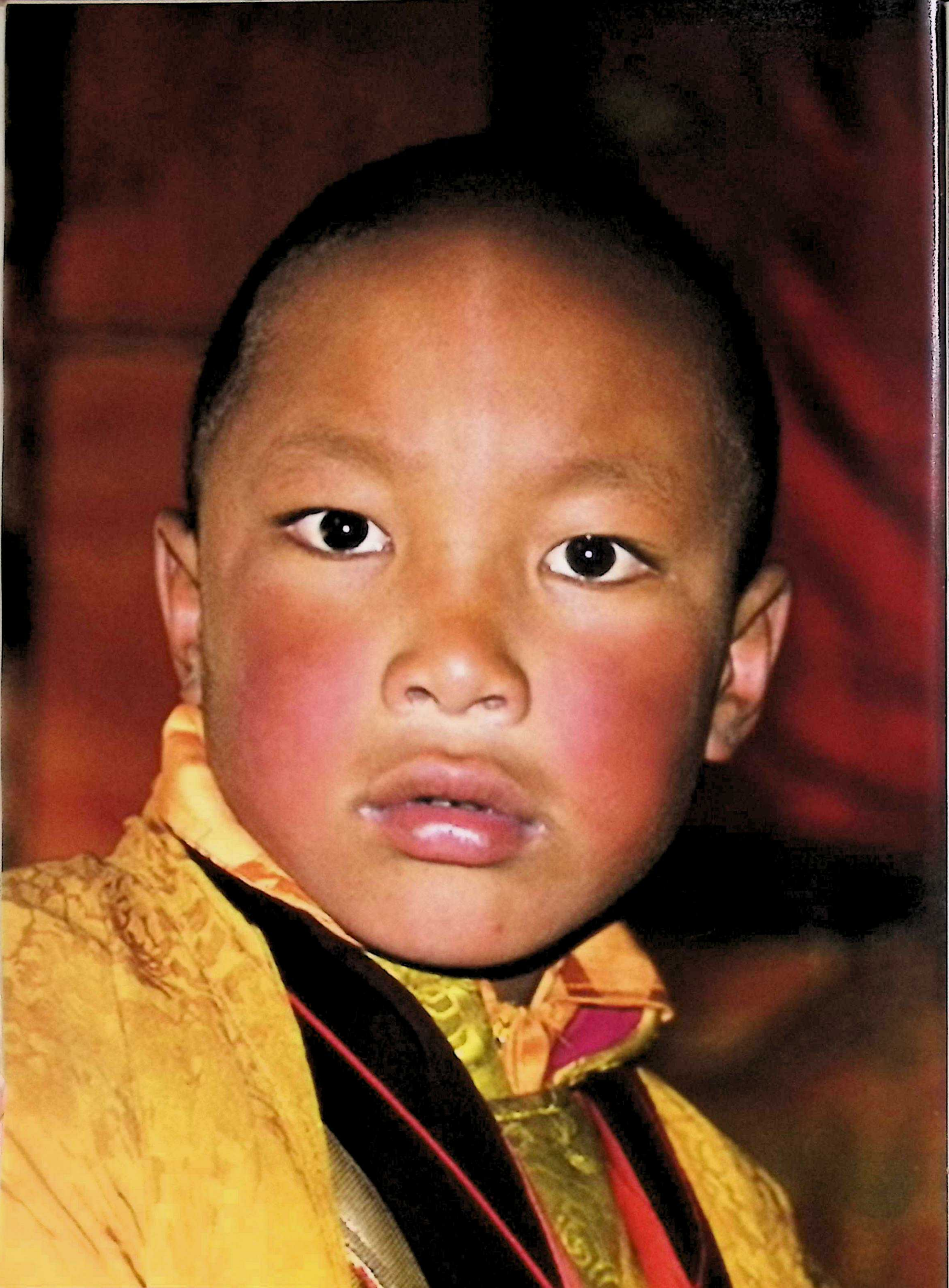
The Doctrine of the Vinaya continued

beings is the precious doctrine of the Victorious One, it is certain that the sacred beings who hold the doctrine now and in the future will exert themselves in preserving and spreading the teachings—especially by not allowing the cherished ornament of the sacred practices of *Vinaya* to disappear. Even through their conduct and dress, they will plant the seeds of virtue that will ripen in liberation; that is certain. The benefit of realizing the inner meaning of *Vinaya* practice transcends thought and expression.

Thus it was said by the great tertön Chogyur Lingpa.

གཡས་སུ་གསེར་ཁབ་གཡུ་གྱི་ལྷུན་པའི་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་ལྷོན་པས་བརྒྱན་པའི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བར། མཁན་པོ་པཎ་ཞྭ་རྣ་རིང་དང་ཆོས་གོས་རྣམ་གསུམ་གསོལ་བ་ལ་འཁོར་དགེ་སློང་གི་ཚོགས་གླེགས་བམ་ཐོགས་པ་རྣམས་ཆོས་ཀྱི་བགྲོ་གླེང་མཛད་པ་དང་མདུན་དུ་ལྷུང་བཟེད་བཀོད་པ་ནི། འབྱུང་འགྱུར་གྱི་ཆར་འདུལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་དར་ཞིང་ཐོས་བསམ་གྱི་བྱ་བ་ལ་འབད་པས་དབྱར་གནས་གསར་དུ་འཛུགས་པ་སོགས་ལྷུང་བཟེད་དང་འཁར་གསིལ་འཆང་བ། འདུལ་བའི་སྡེ་སྣོད་ལ་མཁས་ཤིང་འཛིན་པ་ཕྱོགས་གར་ཡང་མང་དུ་འབྱུང་བར་འདུག་པས། ཆོས་རྗེ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་མགོན་གྱིས། དུས་ཀྱི་འཕེལ་འགྲིབ་ད་ལྟ་བུར་ཡོད་ཡིན། ཅེས་གསུངས་པ་ལྟར། འགྲོ་བའི་སྡུག་བསྔལ་སེལ་བའི་སྨན་གཅིག་པུ་ནི། རྒྱལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཡིན་པས་ད་ལྟ་དང་མ་འོངས་པའི་བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱི་སྐྱེས་བུ་དམ་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་བསྟན་པ་འཛིན་སྐྱོང་སྤེལ་བ་ལ་བརྩོན་པ་དང་། ཁྱད་པར་དམ་ཆོས་འདུལ་བའི་བསྟན་པ་ཡལ་བར་མི་འདོར་བའི་གཅེས་སྤྲས་ཀྱིས་འཛིན་སྐྱོང་གྱིས་དང་། རྟགས་དང་ཆ་ལུགས་ཙམ་གྱིས་ཀྱང་ཐར་པ་ཆ་མཐུན་གྱི་དགེ་བའི་ས་བོན་ཐེབས་པར་ངེས་པས་དངོས་ཀྱི་ཕན་ཡོན་ནི་བསམ་བརྗོད་ལས་འདས་སོ་ཞེས་གཏེར་ཆེན་རྗེའི་ཞལ་སྔ་ནས་གསུངས་པར་སྣང་ངོ་།

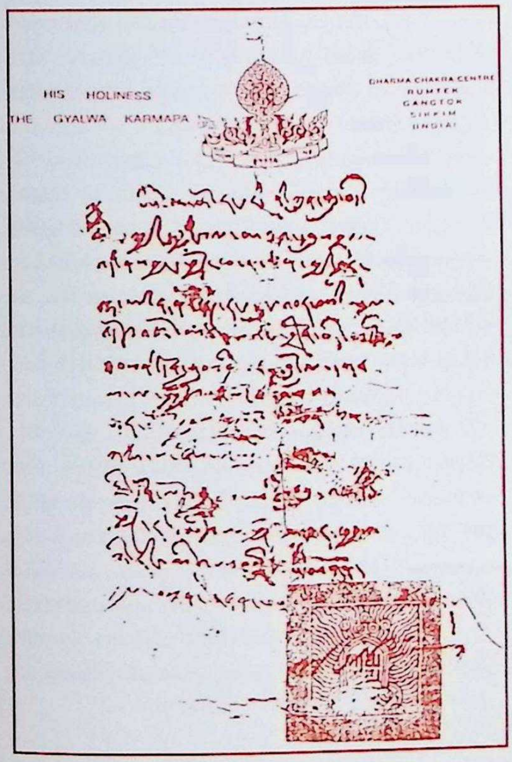
The Seventeenth Karmapa,
Orgyen Trinley Dorje



The Seventeenth Karmapa Orgyen Trinley Dorje

In January 1981, ten months before he passed into parinirvana, the Sixteenth Karmapa presented the Twelfth Tai Situpa with a yellow brocade amulet. "This will protect you," His Holiness explained, "and will someday be of great benefit."

Traditionally, such protection amulets are worn about the neck without being opened. In late 1990, however, after a fruitless search for His Holiness's sacred prediction letter, Tai Situpa remembered his master's words and opened the amulet. Inside, he discovered a folded envelope. Along the outside, His Holiness had written instructions to open the envelope during the Iron Horse year of the Tibetan calendar—the very year in which Tai Situpa had discovered the envelope. Upon opening the envelope, Tai Situpa found the sacred prediction letter, which described in precise detail the location and conditions of the birth of the Seventeenth Karmapa:



HIS HOLINESS
THE GYALWA KARMAPA

DHARMA CHAKRA CENTRE
RUMTEK
GANGTOK
SIKKIM
(INDIA)

Emaho! Self-awareness is always bliss;
The *dharmadhatu* is free from center or edge.

To the north of here, in the east [of the land] of snow
Is a country where self-arisen divine thunder blazes.
[In] a beautiful nomad's place with the name of a cow,
The method is Dondrup and the wisdom is Lolaga.
[Born in] the year of the one used for the earth
[With] the wondrous, far-reaching sound of the white one,
[This] is the one renowned as Karmapa.

He will be nurtured by the Lord Donyö Drup;
Without bias, he pervades all directions;
Without being close to some and distant from others,
He is the protector of all beings.
The sun of the Buddha's Dharma that benefits others always blazes.

above: Sacred Prediction Letter.

left: The Seventeenth Karmapa.

Tai Situpa sent a messenger to Rumtek Monastery, the Karmapa's sacred seat in India, calling for a meeting of all the senior masters of the Karma Kagyu lineage. The meeting was finally arranged for March 29, 1992. Tai Situpa presented the letter to the other senior masters, and together they worked to unravel its meaning. The following interpretation was ultimately issued by Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, the historical and traditional regent of the Karmapa:

Supreme Sun Illuminating the Mind: A word-by-word commentary of the sacred prediction letter of the Sixteenth Karmapa, the Supreme Victor.

The letter begins with Emaho!—How wondrous!—an exclamation of good fortune. Through spontaneous, unending, limitless activity to effortlessly liberate sentient beings, self-aware, co-emergent, primordial wisdom possesses the very nature of absolute, great bliss. This is the aspect of skillful means.

The *dharmadhatu*, which is neither separate nor bound, is free from any notion of center or edge. It is not exhausted by the number of beings, the long eons required to liberate them, or the difficulties involved. Though unborn, to the beings who are to be liberated it appears to take birth and so on. It has no substantial existence as something other. This is the aspect of wisdom.

The first two lines thus describe the utter purity of the ultimate point of view, and the dualistic situation of the relative point of view.

Then, with regally omniscient *bodhicitta*, he decreed what would take place in the future, in order to generate an immense wave of benefit for sentient beings.

To the north of Rumtek, this *dharmachakra* seat of learning and meditation practice, in the east of the Land of Snows, there is outwardly a land held by the virtuous thunder deities who are the same as the great Dralha Yeza. Inwardly and secretly, the land is the primordial, self-arisen *mandala* in which deities blaze with the nine moods of dance.

There, in a beautiful nomadic community signified by the word "cow," the skillful means—or father—will be named Dondrup and the wisdom—or mother—Lolaga. In the year of the one who works the earth, the wondrous *nirmanakaya* will emerge from the mother, the source of all phenomena, after completing the ten stages of a *bodhisattva* within the celestial palace of her womb. His birth will be accompanied by the far-reaching sound of the white one, the conch, surpassing all dissenting proclamations with its splendor. He will be known as Karmapa, renowned throughout the oceans of the pure realms. Although he has perfected the wisdom of the *four empowerments*, in order to achieve complete mastery of the glorious state of a *vajradhara*, he must be nurtured by Tai Situ, who bears the name of Lord Donyö Drup. This accords with the prediction made by Chogyur Lingpa based on his clear vision.

As the distinctive mark of his activity, he will turn the Wheel of the Dharma for those whose *karma* has ripened sufficiently, in a way that pervades all directions without bias. For those who are not karmically prepared, whether near or far, he will sow the seed of liberation in them through his skill in various means. Thus, he is the protector of all beings without exception.

In brief, through the blazing of the sun which delivers immense benefit to others, the Victorious One's teachings dispel the darkness of ignorance, and cause the brilliance of the *kayas* and *wisdoms* to flourish.

The above was composed in the city of Kathmandu by Gyaltsab Migyur Gocha on the fourteenth day of the sixth month, according to the perceptions that arose in my mind.

After this meeting, the sacred letter was ceremoniously enshrined among other precious relics of the Karmapa lineage at Rumtek. The *rinpoches* sent a copy of the prediction letter to Tsurphu Monastery and requested the abbot, Drupon Dechen, to initiate an unpublicized search for the Karmapa. Using the details of the letter as a guide, the lamas set off on the long journey to Lhatok, in eastern Tibet, traveling through steep and winding mountain passes, accessible only on horseback.

Upon arriving safely in the former kingdom of Lhatok, the Tsurphu lamas posed as pilgrims searching for long-lost relatives. They first asked area residents if they knew of a place with the word for "cow" in its name, and were promptly directed to Bakor, the Valley of the Cow. Next, they inquired whether a woman named Lolaga happened to live there. Oh yes, they were told—though she was actually called by a shorter version of the name, Loga. She was the wife of a man named Dondrup.

Concealing their growing excitement, the lamas finally asked if Loga and Dondrup had any children. In reply, they learned that the couple had been blessed with six daughters and three sons. The middle son had been born in the year of the Wood Ox. The following day, as the lamas made their way to Bakor, they questioned a number of neighboring families about Loga and Dondrup, and in particular about their middle son. His name, they learned, was Apo Gaga, which means "beloved older brother."

Remarkable events surrounded the child's birth. Three suns were reported to have appeared in the sky, with a rainbow arching over the center orb. Conch shell horns resounded through the valley for nearly two hours following the child's birth, and many members of the nomadic community supposed that a high lama had arrived in the region. One woman remarked that when she set foot outside her tent, she thought the sound was coming from inside; yet as soon as she stepped back inside, the sound seemed to come from without. To the lamas, this extraordinary event corresponded to the prediction that the Karmapa's birth would be accompanied by the "wondrous, far-reaching sound of the white one."

Upon reaching Dondrup and Loga's summer campsite, the Tsurphu lamas discovered that Apo Gaga had predicted their arrival and had a special tent set up to receive them. As they spoke with the child's parents, the lamas learned of other miraculous events surrounding Apo Gaga's birth. Loga, for example, had had several dreams while carrying her son. In one, three white cranes had offered her a golden letter balanced delicately atop a cup of pure white yogurt. The cranes had told her that the letter was sent by Guru Rinpoche and would one day reveal her son's identity. In another, the eight auspicious symbols described in a number of sacred Tibetan Buddhist rituals sprang from her heart, each glowing with rainbow light.

Dondrup told the lamas that rainbows had appeared over the tent long after sunset on the night before his son was born. The child had been born without difficulty right before sunrise, just as a cuckoo—the king of birds—landed on top of the tent to greet the morning with a beautiful, haunting melody. Among Tibetans, the song of the cuckoo in the morning is considered an extremely auspicious sign.

The Tsurphu monks further learned that Dondrup and Loga had taken their child to receive his Buddhist name from Amdo Palden, the abbot of Kalek Monastery in Lhatok. The abbot had informed them, however, that their son was a special child and couldn't be named by an ordinary lama. He must wait to be named by a special master.

Apo Gaga soon began to display the remarkable qualities Amdo Palden had seen in him. Spontaneously compassionate, he would cry whenever he saw an animal in pain. On occasion, he revealed knowledge of future events. For example, while playing with his sister one day, he suddenly announced that their father's truck had "fallen down." When his sister rebuked him for voicing such thoughts, he replied, "Everything is all right." It was later discovered that the truck in which his father was riding that day had indeed been involved in an accident. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

In 1989, Apo Gaga began his religious training at Kalek Monastery. Revered as an unrecognized reincarnate lama, he was provided with an attendant and a small throne in the shrine hall. In the spring of 1992, he sent word to his parents, advising them to proceed to their summer campsite a month earlier than usual. Accordingly, the family made the move to Bakor just as the Tsurphu lamas arrived in Lhatok. In May, Apo Gaga abruptly left Kalek and returned to his parent's tent.

On the day the travelers from Tsurphu arrived in Bakor, Apo Gaga rose early and loaded some of his clothes on the back of his favorite white goat. Afterwards, he told his mother he was ready to go to his monastery. Indicating, however, that he did not mean Kalek Monastery, he added that it would be good if he could take a few gifts with him from Kalek.

After hearing these and other accounts, the Tsurphu lamas at last revealed the real purpose of their journey to Lhatok. To substantiate their claim, they showed Dondrup and Loga the Sixteenth Karmapa's sacred prediction letter. With inexpressible joy, the amazed parents understood that Apo Gaga was, in fact, the Seventeenth Karmapa.

News of the momentous discovery was immediately relayed to Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche in India, who in turn informed His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. His Holiness examined the prediction letter and other information concerning the child and his birthplace, and formally confirmed the recognition. His Holiness further revealed that the description of the child's birthplace corresponded perfectly with a vision he'd had several months earlier. In his vision, His Holiness had seen green mountains covered with meadows, with two streams flowing on either side of the valley. As His Holiness had gazed upon the pastoral scene, a voice proclaimed, "This is the place where Karmapa was born." It was later learned that His Holiness had mentioned this vision during an audience with Lama Gyaltsen, the father of the young Kalu Rinpoche, and several others.

Soon after the announcement of the child's discovery, the Tsurphu lamas escorted the young Karmapa to Kalek Monastery. There, he met with Akong Tulku Rinpoche and Sherab Tarchin, who had been sent as representatives of Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche. They presented the young Karmapa with the sacred gifts traditionally offered to a young incarnate lama at the time of recognition. These included golden robes and silk scarves sent by Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche.

Later, as Tai Situpa and Goshir Gyaltsabpa prepared to travel to Tibet to preside over the enthronement, His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented them with a formal letter of confirmation.

top left: The Seventeenth Karmapa soon after he was discovered.

bottom left: Dondrup and Loga, parents of the Seventeenth Karmapa.

Known as the Buktam Rinpoche, "Precious Seal of His Holiness," the sealed letter of definitive recognition and confirmation read:

The son born to Karma Dondrup and Loga in the Wood Ox year accords with the testament (of the late Karmapa) and is hereby recognized as the reincarnation of the Sixteenth Karmapa. With prayers for his well-being and the success of his sacred activity. Third day of the fourth month of the Water Monkey year, June 30th, 1992.

In addition, His Holiness sent a white silk scarf, a blessing cord, and his personal rosary to the young Karmapa. He also recorded a brief message of profound advice for followers of the Kagyu lineage. The message, transcribed in full here, was broadcast several times on India National Radio:

Brief Advice to Kagyu Followers from His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Translated from His Message to all followers of the Kagyu lineage, presented to Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Recorded on June 30th, 1992, 10:45am in Dharamsala.

It is mainly Situ Rinpoche, along with Tsurphu Gyaltsab Rinpoche and those closely connected, who are responsible for finding the reincarnation of Gyalwa Karmapa Rinpoche and I am very happy about this. The Gyalwa Karmapa is a supreme master of Buddhist teachings in general, a magnificent lama of Tibet, and in particular of the Kagyu tradition's Karma Kamtsang lineage. To have found his reincarnation therefore is a great benefit for Buddhism in general and for the Kagyu lineage in particular, and so I am very happy.

In Tibetan, there is a proverb that says where there is great Dharma, there is immense Mara, and so there has been a little disharmony and some difficult situations, but these do not have great importance. What is important is the focus on what has real and profound significance. Until now, you have worked to keep in mind what is most important and essential, and you should continue to focus on what is vital, what is crucial.

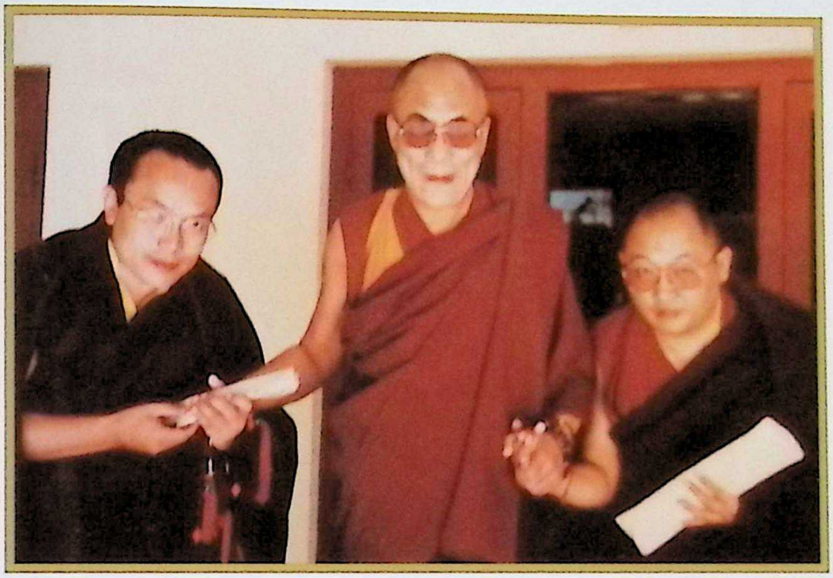
In the world today, many people have an active interest in Buddhist teachings in general, and especially in Eastern philosophy, and particularly in the teachings of Tibetan Buddhism, which bring together the *sutra* and *tantra* traditions. In the future, there will be more people who have this interest. The activities of the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa were most successful; he planted the roots of Dharma, and Buddha's teachings generally flourished. At such a time, we Buddhists, who follow the same teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, and count ourselves his disciples, should continuously maintain pure vision and serve the teachings well, so that numberless sentient beings may always enjoy the source of happiness. We usually pray that the teachings will help all sentient beings; if this is not immediately possible, then at least we can help those on this earth, and especially human beings. This is very important, and so everyone should do whatever possible not to harm others and to travel the noble path of peace.

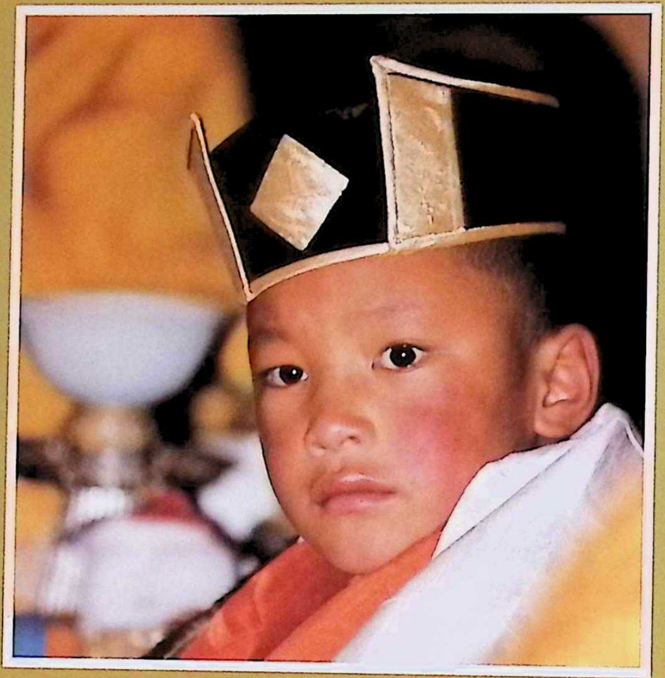
I pray that this precious reincarnation will have a long life and that his activity, as that of the previous incarnation of the Gyalwa Karmapa, will flourish for the benefit of the teachings and of sentient beings. Whatever his wishes are, may they be spontaneously accomplished. I wish you all Tashi Delek.

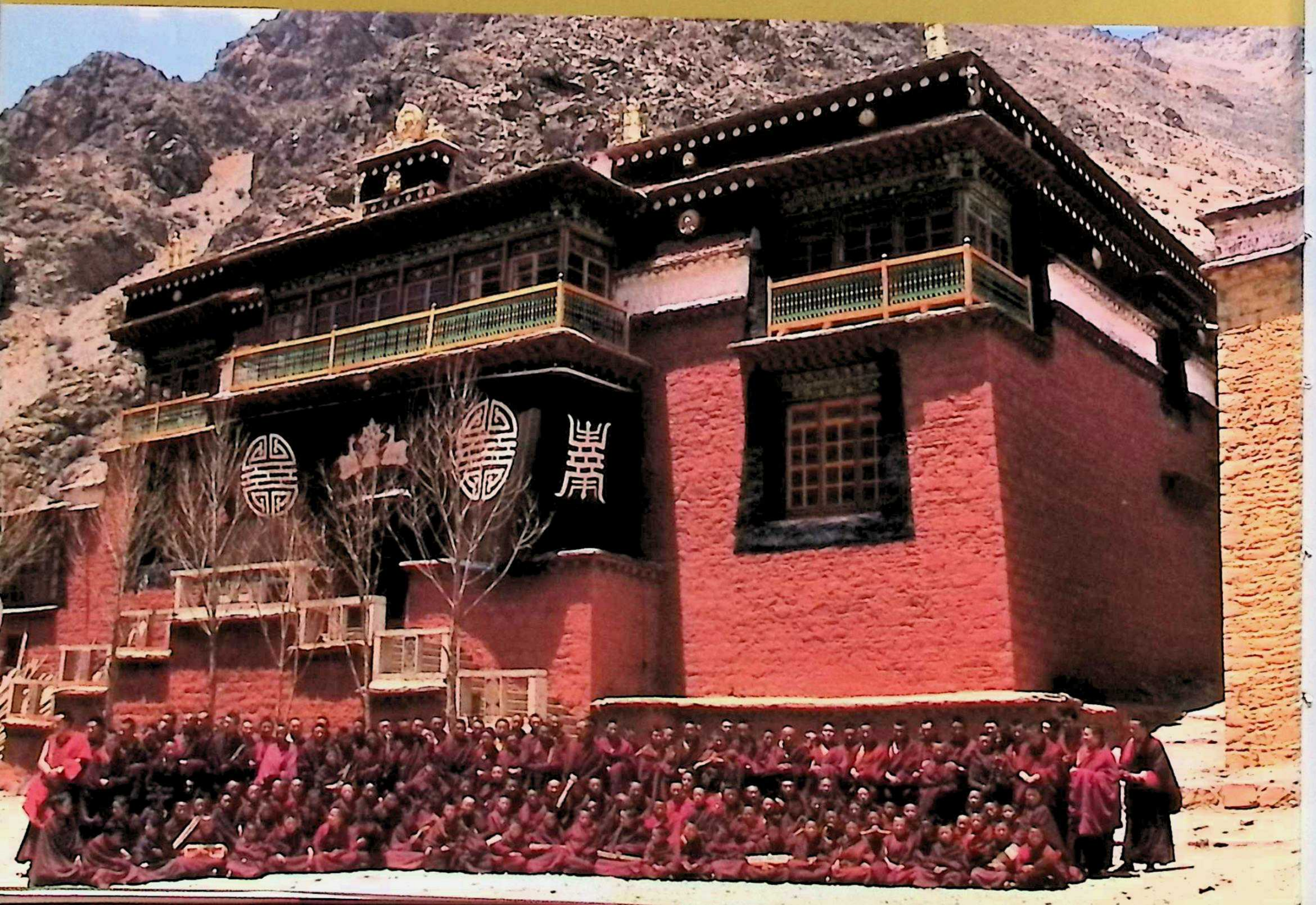
On July 13th, 1992, Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche arrived at Tsurphu to meet His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa. They were received in an elaborate ceremony hosted by Tsurphu Monastery and other Kagyu monasteries in the surrounding area. Afterwards, they met His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa in a formal ceremony, during which they paid homage and presented His Holiness with sacred offerings.

top right: Tai Situ Rinpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche.

bottom right: Rumtek Monastery, seat of the Karmapas in Sikkim.







As Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche spent more time informally with His Holiness, both found themselves profoundly moved by the many ways in which the young Karmapa mirrored his previous incarnation. Fearless, playful, and composed, the seven year-old Karmapa radiated natural compassion and a powerful presence. Over the ensuing weeks, he revealed himself in countless ways as the indisputable incarnation of the Sixteenth Karmapa, whose power and compassion had shone like the sun.

In August 1992, the Seventeenth Karmapa was formally ordained as a monk in an elaborate ritual known as "the hair-cutting ceremony." The ceremony was conducted in the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, directly before the Jowo, the most highly revered statue of the Buddha in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. During the ceremony, the Karmapa was formally presented with gifts sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, together with the prayers for the Karmapa's long life and glorious activity.

After the Karmapa made prostrations before the Jowo, Tai Situ Rinpoche cut a few strands of his hair as a symbol of renunciation of worldly concerns. Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche then consecrated the crown of His Holiness's head with sacred water. Finally, the *rinpoches* formally proclaimed His Holiness's name as Orgyen Trinley Dorje, prophesied by Guru Rinpoche in the ninth century:

Pal Chabdhak Rangjung Orgyen Gyalway Nyugu Drondul Trinley Dorje Tsal Chokle Nampar Gyalway De...

The Glorious All-Pervading (Guru of) Oddiyana, Shoot of the Victorious Ones, Vajra of Enlightened Activity which Tames Beings, Accomplished One, Victorious in All Directions...

His Holiness Orgyen Trinley Dorje was officially enthroned at Tsurphu Monastery in September 1992, on the auspicious day of the new moon. More than twenty thousand pilgrims, many of whom had traveled enormous distances, poured into Tsurphu for the ceremony. Nearly three hundred *tulkus*, abbots, senior lamas, and representatives of monasteries and Dharma centers came from around the world. Devotees from all parts of the globe presented a vast array of offerings—including ritual objects, musical instruments, cymbals, brocades, and other auspicious objects.

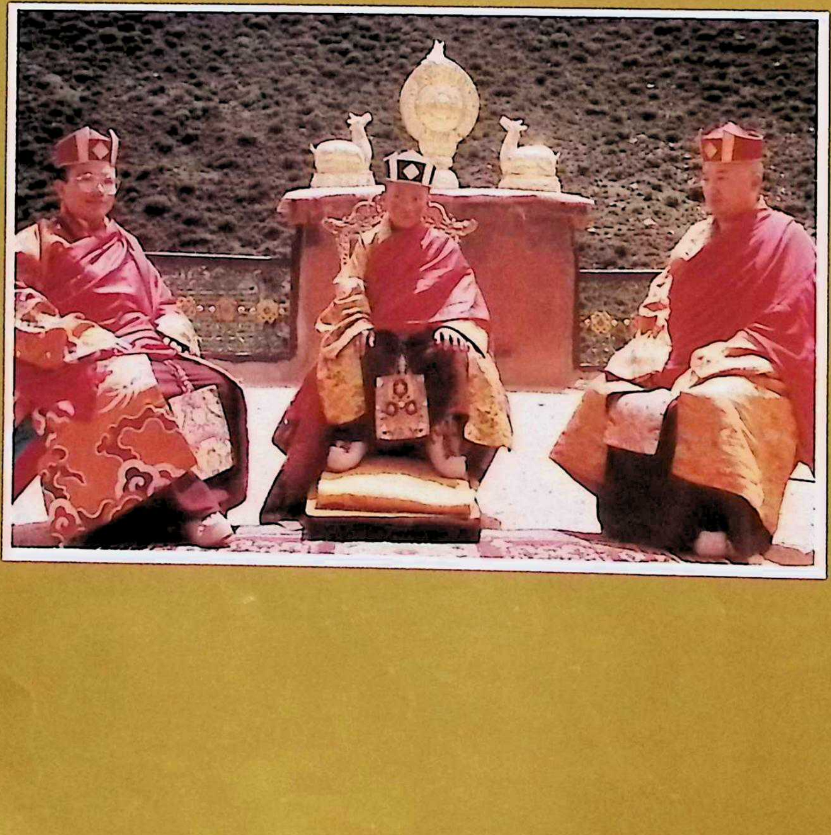
Tsurphu Monastery was obliged to request government permission in order to host such a large public ceremony. In response to the request, Beijing sent the Minister of Religious Affairs and several local officials from Lhasa. They attended the first part of the ceremony, during which the Minister conferred official recognition of Orgyen Trinley Dorje as the Seventeenth Karmapa.

Tai Situ Rinpoche opened the second half of the ceremony by presenting the letter of prophecy written by the Sixteenth Karmapa, the sealed recognition letter of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the written prediction of the State Oracle of Tibet. While offering prayers were chanted, Tai Situpa presented His Holiness with the *eight auspicious substances*, the *eight auspicious symbols*, and the *seven attributes of a universal monarch*. Selected abbots then presented discourses on a wide range of religious topics. Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche sealed the formal enthronement with ritual offerings of a *mandala* and symbols of enlightened body, speech, and mind.

For the many Tibetans who had endured unspeakable pain and striven in the face of unceasing hardship to rebuild the shattered monuments of their faith, the enthronement of a new Karmapa came as a miraculous event. Tens of thousands of pilgrims listened raptly to the proceedings broadcast through speakers set up along the temple walls. At the conclusion of the ceremony, their devotion was rewarded by an

top left: Gyalwa Karmapa during hair-cutting ceremony.

bottom left: Tsurphu Monastery, seat of the Karmapas in Tibet.



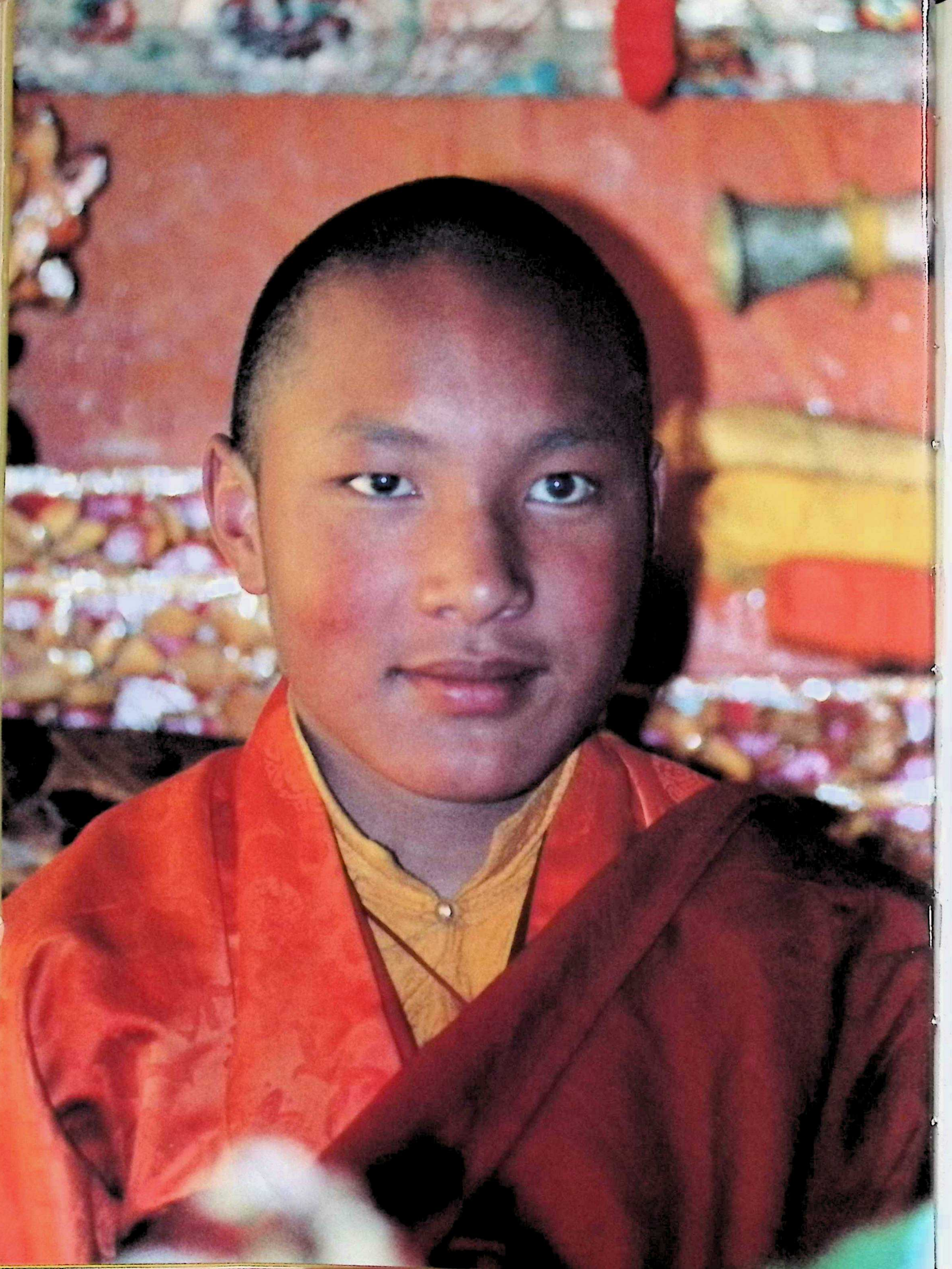
invitation to enter the temple and receive His Holiness's personal blessing. Since the Karmapa is held to be a living Buddha, of whom a single glimpse is sufficient to ensure a fortunate rebirth, the opportunity to receive his blessing could only be considered an immeasurable gift.

Two days after the enthronement, His Holiness gave his first formal *empowerment*. Upon a crowd of more than twenty thousand fortunate disciples, he bestowed the blessing of Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. The day dawned bright and clear, with flocks of beautiful birds circling in the sky and a rainbow shining overhead. As a gentle scattering of snowflakes fell, many of those attending reported seeing images of Chenrezig, Guru Rinpoche, Amitabha, and other sacred deities manifesting in the sky.

The Seventeenth Karmapa currently resides at Tsurphu Monastery. Naturally, his followers at Rumtek in India and other monasteries and Dharma centers around the world eagerly await a visit from His Holiness, pending arrangements for the necessary travel documents. In the meantime, each day is occupied with study, practice, and sacred Dharma activity. An extraordinary beacon of hope, His Holiness receives a steady stream of devotees from all over Tibet and other parts of the globe. May the light of His compassion extend to all sentient beings.

top left: Tai Situ Rinpoche presenting an offering to the Seventeenth Karmapa during his enthronement ceremony.

bottom left: Tai Situ Rinpoche, the Seventeenth Karmapa, and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche.



Long Life Prayers

Spontaneous Fulfillment of Wishes: A Prayer for the Long Life of Tenzin Kunchab Wangi Dorje (All-Pervading Holder of the Doctrine, the Powerful Vajra), the Seventeenth Incarnation of the Supreme Guide, Karmapa, written by His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

Om Soti

King of the Shakya, endowed with the full abundance of the ten powers,
Lord of the World, Ocean of Glorious Ones,
and Embodiment of Compassion, the Noble Lotus Born Vajra,
all who are the source of refuge, today, please bestow the conditions of virtue.

Preceded by the dawn light of your intention like that of a mother for her children,
your supreme emanation like the sun is radiant with the marks and signs of the Buddha.
Exquisite dawn for the fortunate ones in this realm that you illuminate,
you are the hope and the benefit of us all.

Abundance who knows the Dharma of Scripture and the Dharma of Realization transmitted by the Glorious One,
Great Embodiment of the Ocean of Compassion that extends everywhere,
who has perfectly attained the spontaneous activity of empowerment,
to the Holder of Vajra, the Karmapa, I bow.

Master of the perfect mode of liberation of
the full pearl rosary of the succession of previous Karmapas
imbued with the stainless aura of deeds to uphold the transmission,
Glorious Lord of Beings, I pray you live long.

The fluttering expanse of the fine fabric of scriptural knowledge
is embellished by the pinnacle gem of your full realization and experience
supported on the golden staff of your complete examination of truth;
Supreme Incarnation, Victory Banner of the Transmission, may you live long.

From Marpa of Lhodrak and the others, your crown ornament of siddhas,
you have obtained the treasury of instructions of the ocean of siddhas;
protector who guards and spreads the transmission of the family of siddhas,
Lord of the Mandala of Supreme Accomplishment, may you live long.

May you adopt under your care the realms wherever activity may be manifest,
in India, China, Tibet, East, and West, in every corner of the world,
so that the roots of supreme happiness for the diversity of beings are established
and the excellent tradition replete in the wealth of Dharma spread.

Through the tremendous power of the splendor of the truth
of the lamas, yidams, and the Three Jewels,
the union of Dharmata and Interdependence, the foundation of all things,
and these true words of pure, supreme intention,
may these objects of aspiration be effortlessly and spontaneously fulfilled.

A Prayer for the Long Life of the Karmapa, written by the Sakya Trizin

Emanation of the sixth Guide of Beings in this Fortunate Eon
and of the great siddha Saraha,
the seventeenth incarnation of Dusum Khyenpa,
may your lotus feet stand firm and your activity increase.

You see just as it is the very nature of all phenomena to be known,
and through your love, you act as the refuge of all beings.
Through your power you are victorious over the maras.
May your lotus feet stand firm
and your activity increase.

The illumination of your activity,
derived from your accumulated merit and wisdom,
developed in full array,
causes the forest of lotuses
of the Doctrine of the Glorious One to flourish.
Moon of the speech of the Pure Dharma,
may your lotus feet stand firm
and your activity increase.

You are the main teacher of hundreds of thousands of renunciates,
the father of a million bodhisattvas,
and the great master of countless vidyadharas,
may your lotus feet stand firm
and your activity increase.

You plant the banner of victory
of the teaching in this world.
The flag of your renown
is unfurled in all quarters.
Lord of the activity of the Glorious Ones, Karmapa,
may your lotus feet stand firm
and your activity increase.

You who spreads the teaching of the King of Sages
and are the protector of beings in this time of degeneracy,
emanation of the Lord of the World, Chenrezig,
Karmapa, may your lotus feet stand firm
and your activity increase.

May these prayers be accomplished
through the interdependent vows of the supreme guide, the holy lama,
the truth of the authentic Three Jewels,
and our own pure, excellent wish.

A Prayer for the Long Life of the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa, written by the Minling Trichen

Namo Gurubhe!

Ultimate guide, the Three Secrets of the Accomplished Ones incarnate,
Regent of the Glorious Ones of the three times, protector of sentient beings,
sole refuge, perpetual and unfailing, foremost of the Three Jewels,
unequaled self-manifestation of the compassion of all the Glorious Ones,
may you remain unchanging in perfect health for a hundred eons!

Supreme Mountain, abiding continually for the disciples of this world,
having completely crossed the ocean of Dharma of the Three Vehicles,
unfurl the Victory Banner of the doctrine of the superior vehicle,
on the summit of the King of Mountains,
never sinking, extending over all.

Dedication

May the seeds of virtuous action sown in this work flourish for all sentient beings.
May all beings find genuine masters and quickly attain enlightenment.
May all the great religions of the world flourish for the benefit of beings according to their temperaments.

May this precious lineage of the Gyalwa Karmapa and the Kagyu siddhas remain until all beings
are freed from the ocean of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

Through the blessing of the buddhas who attained the three kayas,
the blessing of the unchanging truth of the Dharma,
and the blessing of the limitless aspirations of the sangha,
may these wishes be fulfilled.

Glossary

The words in parenthesis represent a phonetic approximation of the sound of the Tibetan word.

Atisha
A great Indian master of the eleventh century who transmitted the pure *Mahayana* lineage known as Kadampa in Tibet. Gampopa mastered this transmission and later combined it with the *Mahamudra* transmission he received from Jetsun Milarepa. The resulting transmission of Gampopa is called *Ka Chag Chuwo Chidre*—the merging of the two rivers of Word (Kadampa) and *Mudra* (*Mahamudra*).

Bardo
The interval of consciousness between the end of one life and rebirth into another, or any other of the six distinctive intervals of consciousness, such as dream, waking, meditation, etc.

Blessing (jinlab)
The wisdom transmitted by a master or deity to a disciple. Additionally described by words such as "transmission" or "grace," blessing occurs through the meeting of the pure compassion of the master or deity with the pure devotion of the disciple.

Bodhicitta (changchub sem)
In its most general sense, *bodhicitta* signifies awakened mind. Ultimate *bodhicitta* is the union of emptiness and compassion that arises from directly realizing *buddha* nature, free from concepts. Relative *bodhicitta* is the aspiration to establish all beings in *bodhi*, buddhahood, freedom from suffering, having seen the helplessness inherent in the unenlightened state of existence.

Bodhisattva (changchub sempa)
A manifestation of a *buddha*, or one who is cultivating the path to become a *buddha*, whose life is guided by the aspiration to establish all beings in buddhahood, free from suffering.

Bodhisattva Vow (changchub sem kyi dompa)
The transmission of ordination for one entering the path of conduct of a *bodhisattva*. One formally vows to accomplish enlightenment so that all sentient beings attain complete freedom from suffering on the level of buddhahood.

Buddha (sangye)
A *buddha* is one who has attained complete enlightenment. *Buddha*—sometimes rendered as buddhahood—may also be used as a term for complete enlightenment itself.

Chenrezig
The *bodhisattva* Chenrezig is the divine embodiment of the compassion of all the *buddhas* and one of the eight main *bodhisattvas*. Chenrezig manifests in a variety of forms. An image of the four-armed Chenrezig appears in the portrait of Mikyö Dorje, the Eighth Karmapa, in the *Golden Rosary* chapter.

Chö
The lineage of the great 12th century female master of Tibet, Machig Labdron, which teaches methods for sharply cutting through the confusion of clinging to the experience of a self as real.

Dakini (khandroma)
A general term for female *bodhisattvas* and female deities. *Wisdom dakinis* are manifestations of enlightenment.

Deity (lha, or yidam)
In general, there are two types of deities, those who are enlightened and those who are not. A *wisdom deity* is a manifestation of the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha; an enlightened deity's appearance derives from the particular methods of compassionate activity he or she embodies. Worldly and local deities are unenlightened sentient beings. They are often devoted to the Dharma and act to help practitioners and preserve the teachings.

Deity of Wealth (norlha)
The divine embodiment of the compassionate activity of the *buddhas* with the purpose of alleviating poverty, particularly when it becomes an obstacle to the accomplishment of enlightenment.

Dechog (see Khorlo Dechog)

Dharma (chö)
Dharma is the teaching of the Buddha. Though the general meaning of *dharma* is phenomenon, the term most frequently refers to the Holy Dharma, profound manifestation, the path that leads all beings to liberation from suffering—to enlightenment.

Dharma Wheel (chö kyi khorlo)
The Buddha is said to set the Wheel of Dharma in motion when he teaches. This means that he causes beings to proceed on the path of wisdom rather than circle in endless rebirths through ignorance. An eight-spoked wheel symbolizes this conveyance of wisdom.

Dharmakaya (chö ku)
Among the three *kayas* (*bodies*, or levels of manifestation of a *buddha*), the *dharmakaya* is the radiant emptiness of the self-aware mind. It is without form, the sphere in which all form manifests. For more information refer to the section on Dorje Chang, in the *Golden Rosary* chapter.

Dorje Bernachen
The two-armed Mahakala, foremost protector of the Kagyu lineage and the Karmapa. He is a divine manifestation of the wrathful enlightened activity of Chenrezig, who is the embodiment of the limitless compassion of all the *buddhas*. An image of Gonpo Bernachen appears in the lower corner of the portrait of Dudul Dorje, the Thirteenth Karmapa.

Eight Auspicious Symbols (tashi tak gye)
Comprised of the supreme parasol, the golden fish, the treasure vase, the inviting lotus, the far-reaching conch, the glorious knot, the victory banner, and the golden wheel of Dharma, they represent various profound qualities of enlightenment. Offering these symbols to the Buddha creates auspicious conditions for the accomplishment of enlightenment.

Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche
The *nirmanakaya* of the Buddha, Guru Rinpoche, subdued the recalcitrant worldly gods and spirits and established the first transmission of *Vajrayana* Buddhism in Tibet. Ritual dances introduced at Tsurphu Monastery by the great *tertön* Chögyur Lingpa invite the eight divine emanations of Guru Rinpoche, thereby invoking his blessing and other conditions conducive to the attainment of enlightenment.

Emaho
An exclamation of joy and rapt wonder expressing the recognition of the truth.

Empowerment (wang)
A ritual in which a master invokes the enlightened presence of a deity or *bodhisattva* to bless the open, devoted mind of a disciple. The disciple thereby receives the authority, blessing transmission, and empowerment to cultivate the meditation of that deity. Four specific empowerments bestowed during the ritual serve to purify and mature four aspects of the continuum of the disciple that ultimately ripen in the attainment of the four *kayas*, or "bodies," of a *buddha*.

Emptiness (tongpa nyi)
The doctrine of emptiness indicates that all phenomena are devoid of independent reality, because they are temporary manifestations produced by interdependent causes and conditions, and therefore illusory. All phenomena arise from emptiness, which is primordial, without beginning, cessation, or limitation.

Enlightenment (changchub)
Supreme enlightenment is the final transformation of all ignorance and limitation and the complete realization of all the primordial potential of the mind. That is called *buddha*. The various stages of the path on which one progresses from complete ignorance to perfect realization are stages of increasing enlightenment. The fruition, perfect enlightenment, transcends all duality, conceptualization, and limitation.

Four Activities (lay zhi)
The activities of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and subduing or destroying are applied through meditation to create conditions conducive for the attainment of enlightenment.

Four Streams of Oral Lineage (kahbab kyi chö zhi, Kagyu)
Four types of profound intimate transmission received by the Lord Tilopa constitute the very heart of the three *yanas*—the small, vast, and *vajra* vehicles presented by the Buddha to convey beings along the path to liberation.

Great Lion Throne (seng tri chenpo)
The throne of the Buddha supported by eight lions, from which he transmitted the Dharma.

Guhyasamaja (Sangwa Dupa)
A *yidam*. An image of Guhyasamaja appears in the portrait of Rolpe Dorje, the Fourth Karmapa.

Hayagriva (Tamdrin)
A wrathful emanation of the *bodhisattva* Chenrezig, appearing both as a protector and a *yidam*.

Hevajra (Kye Dorje)
A *yidam*. An image of Hevajra appears in the portrait of Lord Marpa.

Hinayana (tekpa chung)
Among the three vehicles, or general approaches, taught by the Buddha for conveying sentient beings on the path to enlightenment, the *Hinayana* is capable of carrying the practitioner alone beyond the suffering of *samsara* to the peace of nirvanic pleasure.

Illusory Body of Wisdom (yeshe gyumai ku)
In contrast with an ordinary body, the illusory body of a being who has realized the essential nature of phenomena is not subject to birth and death. Such a holy being is free from the ignorance that clings to the body and other apparent forms as real, and can manifest miracles before and after death.

Kalachakra (Dus kyi Khorlo)
A *yidam*. The *Kalachakra Tantra* contains the Buddha's teachings concerning Kalachakra.

Kalpa
In Buddhist cosmology, time extends into vast universal cycles during which worlds arise, abide, and are destroyed. During a fortunate *kalpa*, or eon, a *buddha* will manifest in the world and teach the Dharma so that sentient beings may be liberated from the ignorance that binds them in suffering. During a *dark kalpa*, beings lack the necessary merit to meet a *buddha*, teachings are unavailable, and sentient beings have no opportunity of liberation. The present age, known as the *excellent kalpa* because one thousand *buddhas* will manifest in order to teach the Dharma, is an extremely precious time to be born in a human body. The life-span of a being in a hell or god's realm, where we might take birth after this life, is also measured in terms of *kalpas*.

Karma (lay)
One of the most important roots of the Buddha's teachings, the principle of *karma* explains that a sentient being's experiences result entirely from previous actions. Virtuous *karma* leads to the various states of happiness and fulfillment that may be experienced within conditioned existence. Nonvirtuous *karma* leads to every form of suffering. Sentient beings are compelled by their emotions to accumulate good and bad *karma*, while these emotions themselves arise based on habitual clinging to a concept of self and other. If one realizes the essential nature devoid of a truly existent self, one ceases to accumulate *karma* and attains freedom from conditioned existence.

Karma Kamstang, Karma Kagyu
Among the lineages of Kagyu that derive from the Lord Marpa, the lineage coming down through the succession of incarnations of the Karmapa is known as the Karma Kagyu or Karma Kamtsang.

Kaya (ku)
An honorific word for the body, or manifestation, of a *buddha*. The three aspects or "bodies" of a fully enlightened Buddha are known as the *dharmakaya*, or dharma body, the *sambhogakaya*, or experience body, and the *nirmanakaya*, or emanation body. The fourth *kaya* is the essential indivisibility of the three, known as the *Essence Body*, or *Svabhavikakaya*.

Khorlo Dechog
Together with Vajravarahi, Dechog (Chakrasamvara in Sanskrit) is the primary *yidam* of the Kagyu lineage. Lord Marpa received the essential transmission of Dechog from Naropa on his third and most perilous journey to India. An image of the deity, embraced by Vajravarahi, appears in the portrait of Lord Tilopa.

Lama
La means *highest* and *ma* means *mother*. Properly applied, this term refers to one who has developed the highest qualities and therefore directly perceives all beings impartially with the selfless love and compassion of a mother for an only child.

Liberation (tarpa)
The end of suffering, which results from transforming the fundamental ignorance that clings to a self.

Lineage (gyu)
The unimpaired continuity of wisdom, commencing with the Buddha, transmitted from master to disciple unbroken down to the present time.

Lord of the World (Jikten Wangchuk)
An epithet of the Lord of Compassion, Chenrezig.

Mahakali (Nagmo Chenmo)
She is a divine manifestation of wrathful enlightened activity. An image of one of her manifestations, the goddess Dusolma, appears in the lower portion of the portrait of Lord Marpa.

Mahamudra (cha gya chenpo)
A term for the ultimate essence that includes and transcends all phenomena. There are many other terms for this essence, including *buddha* nature, *Maha Ati*, *Madhyamaka*, *Prajnaparamita*, and Emptiness Endowed with Qualities. To distinguish among these names, *Mahamudra* specifically refers to the lineage descended to Lord Marpa through the Lord Maitripa and the Lord Naropa.

Mahayana (Great Vehicle, tekpa chenpo)

Among the three general approaches to enlightenment taught by the Buddha, the Great Vehicle of the *bodhisattva* will carry all sentient beings to liberation without leaving any behind.

Maitreya (Jampa)

Of the one thousand *buddhas* of the *excellent kalpa*, the next—the fifth—will be Buddha Maitreya. At this time, he presides over the pure celestial realm called Tushita, and manifests as a *bodhisattva*. *The Five Teachings of the Lord Maitreya*, transmitted from Maitreya to the Indian master Asanga in the fourth century, are among the most important commentaries concerning the Buddha's teaching of the nature of reality.

Mandala (kyilkhor)

A symbolic representation of buddhahood and the perspective of enlightened awareness. The external world, as well, can be realized as the *mandala*, or sacred environment of a *buddha*. The term *celestial* or *divine mandala* refers to the environment of a wisdom deity.

Manjushri (Jampalyang)

The *bodhisattva* Manjushri is the divine embodiment of the wisdom of all *buddhas*.

Mantra (ngag)

Sacred words and syllables preserved in Sanskrit, taught by the Buddha to invoke the blessings of deities and thus transform both the practitioner and the manifestation of phenomena.

Mara (du)

The arch demon who seeks to prevent beings from escaping from *samsara*. *Mara* is actually one's own habitual tendency to cling to a self and external appearances as ultimately real. This habitual obscuration is described as four *maras*: the *mara* of the heavenly children (fascination with desireable appearances), the *mara* of embodiment (fixation on appearances as if they were real), the *mara* of the negative emotions (emotional entanglement), and the *mara* of death (trauma of impermanence).

Medicine Buddha (Sangye Menla)

The divine embodiment of the compassionate activity of the *buddhas* especially dedicated to alleviating sickness and negative emotions, particularly when they become obstacles to the accomplishment of enlightenment.

Merit (sonam)

The positive power of practicing virtue. When one avoids harmful activities and acts beneficially towards others, one accumulates merit which is experienced as good conditions and happiness. Through the accumulation of merit, sentient beings develop conditions for wisdom to arise, just as when there is ample firewood it is possible to produce a brilliant fire.

Method (tab)

Great compassion that naturally arises in the sphere of wisdom, and also great joy and clarity, qualities of the essential nature of mind that manifest as various deities and the methods of their practice leading practitioners to the realization of buddhahood.

Naga (lu)

A class of sentient beings usually associated with serpents and spirits of water and earth.

Nine Moods of Dance of a Heruka (gar nyam gu)

An expression of the various qualities of fearlessness, joy, and compassion of a fully enlightened being.

Nirmanakaya (tulku)

The physical manifestation of an enlightened being as perceived by ordinary sentient beings.

Nirvana (nya ngen lay day pa)

Liberation from misery. When one actually attains freedom from suffering, the concept of a state of *nirvana* as separate from this world disappears.

Nonhumans (mi ma yin)

Gods or spirits in general.

Om Mani Pemay Hung

The *mantra* invoking the blessing of Chenrezig, the *bodhisattva* of compassion. Often referred to as the *King of Mantras*, *Om Mani Pemay Hung* naturally invokes the blessings of all enlightened deities, liberating all sentient beings by purifying and transforming the five defilements derived from ignorance.

Oral Transmission (Kagyu, nyen gyu)

The intimate, direct transmission of wisdom from a master to a disciple, as if whispered. Oral transmission is beyond conceptual description and cannot be received through mere words or from a book.

Ordination (rabtu jungwa)

The *vows of individual liberation* are the methods taught in the *Vinaya* for one to cease harming others and oneself. The pure, noble motivation of the ordination generates a powerful, continuous stream of merit that greatly increases the possibility of achieving realization. Ordination typically refers to the vows of a novice (t: getsul) or a fully ordained monk or nun (t: gelong/gelongma).

Pa Dampa Sangye

The great Indian master who transmitted the lineage of the *Perfection of Wisdom* called *Shijay*, or "Pacification," in Tibet beginning in the late eleventh century.

Padmasambhava

The Lord Padmasambhava, Guru Rinpoche, was born miraculously in a lotus flower on the Dhanakosha Lake in the country of Orgyen. An emanation of Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, he showed the way to attain enlightenment through relying on human teachers. At the invitation of the Dharma king Trisong Detsen and the abbot Shantarakshita, he established the Dharma in Tibet during the eighth century. Having attained the enlightenment of immortality, he resides in the Pure Land known as the Glorious Copper-colored Mountain.

Palden Lhamo

The primary female protector of the Kagyu lineage, an emanation of Vajravarahi. See *Mahakali*.

Paramitas, Ten (pa rol tu chin pa chu)

Ten practices that constitute the path of a *bodhisattva*: generosity, moral discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, wisdom, method, aspiration, power, and primordial wisdom.

Parinirvana

Parinirvana refers to the passing of a *buddha* or any great enlightened master from this life.

Path, Stages of (lam)

In general, the Dharma is "the path" leading to liberation. The development of a *bodhisattva* traversing the path is described in terms of five paths: the paths of accumulation, application, seeing, becoming, and completion. The ten stages of realization of a *bodhisattva* can be correlated with the latter three paths, commencing with the Path of Seeing.

Perfection of Wisdom (sherab kyi pa rol tu chin pa)

The Buddha's teachings on the empty nature of the perceiving mind and perceived environment. The divine embodiment of this wisdom is the Great Mother (t: *Yum Chenmo*), known as the mother of all *buddhas* because enlightenment is born from the realization of emptiness. The Perfection of Wisdom is also another name for *Mahamudra*.

Primordial (ye, dodma)

When one directly realizes truth, one discovers that truth is ultimate and has been so from the beginning, even while it wasn't seen. Truth is primordial, unaffected by time. Terms such as *primordial buddha* (t: *dodmai sangye*) and *primordial awareness* (t: *yeshe*) refer to the awareness of enlightenment, which is beyond any reference of time.

Protector (gonpo, damchen)

A deity whose activity is to preserve the teachings and help practitioners accomplish the goal of enlightenment.

Rain of Flowers (metok char)

A phenomenon produced by worldly gods out of reverence for a *buddha* or a great master. Many times when the divine flowers dry, they resemble a fine, frail sponge and are kept as a relic.

Rainbow Body (ja lu)

Various phenomena that may manifest at the time of death, signifying the attainment of enlightenment. In the most dramatic form of rainbow body, masters such as Vairocana and Yeshe Tsogyal proceeded to the celestial realms through the sky, taking their physical bodies with them. In other cases, exemplified by Jetsun Milarepa, the body is seen to grow smaller and smaller and may dissolve altogether or leave only hair and nails.

Realm, Celestial or Pure (shing kham)

A type of paradise possessing ideal conditions for the practice of Dharma.

Realms, Lower (ngensong sum)

Based on our *karma*, we have taken birth over and over in any one of six different realms of *samsara*: the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, the human realm, the demigod realm, and the god realm. The first three realms of rebirth are called the lower realms.

Rinpoche

"Supremely precious," a title of respect normally reserved for highly revered incarnate masters.

Sambhogakaya (longchö zogpai ku)

Among the three *kayas*, the *sambhogakaya* is the spontaneous display of compassion arising in the midst of the realization of emptiness. It is a body with form perceptible only to highly realized ones.

Samsara (khorwa)

Circling, a term for denoting our condition as sentient beings, who wish to obtain happiness, but helplessly create the conditions by which we must take rebirth lifetime after lifetime, enduring endless suffering.

Sangha (gendun)

One of the Three Jewels; the community of enlightened *bodhisattvas* and saints such as Tara and Chenrezig who act as our guides and examples on the path. The term also refers to the ordained community of monks and nuns. Nowadays in the West, all Buddhists are often referred to as *sangha*.

Shambala
A northern pure land, the kingdom of the emperor Rigden, where the inhabitants practice the *tantra* of Kalachakra.

Siddha (drubtop)
One who has attained miraculous powers, particularly through the supreme attainment, enlightenment.

Six Yogas of Naropa (naro chö drug)
The supreme methods of the Kagyu lineage for the realization of *Mahamudra*, condensing the essential points of all the various methods of *tantra*. The six yogas are: subtle heat, illusory body, dream, clear light, *bardo*, and powa (transference of consciousness).

Sixteen Arhats (neten chudrug)
Sixteen enlightened ones who manifest as *arhats*, saints who have liberated themselves through the methods of the *Hinayana*. Immortal beings, their special activity is to preserve the Buddha's teaching and cause it to flourish.

Stupa (chöten)
A monument or reliquary representing the enlightened mind. The traditional shapes of stupas symbolize the stages of realization. Stupas are built to pacify disharmony in a country or region; peace, health, prosperity, and other positive conditions arise through their blessing.

Sutra (do)
Teachings recorded in the Buddhist canon as the authoritative words of Buddha Shakyamuni in his historic, human manifestation. *Sutras* usually take the form of a dialogue between the Buddha and his disciples. *Sutra* is one of the four aspects of the teaching of the Buddha: *vinaya*, *abhidharma*, *sutra*, and *tantra*.

Tantra (gyu)
Texts that teach the methods of *Vajrayana*; also, the practices and doctrines contained in those texts.

Tara (Drolma)
The divine embodiment of the mother-like compassion of all the *buddhas* and a manifestation of Chenrezig. The *bodhisattva* Tara's special activities are the pacification of external obstacles to the accomplishment of enlightenment, the blessing of long life, and the protection of sentient beings from all kinds of fear. She appears in the portrait of Wangchuk Dorje, the Ninth Karmapa.

Ten Directions (chog chu)
A term signifying the totality of space: the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate, the zenith, and the nadir.

Ten Principles of Virtuous Conduct (gewa chu)
The *three principles of virtuous physical conduct* are to save the lives of others, give generously, and observe sexual morality. The *four principles of virtuous verbal conduct* are to speak truthfully, gently, and meaningfully and to reconcile others who are divided against each other. The *three principles of virtuous mental conduct* are to know contentment with what one has, to take joy in the happiness of others, and to trust *karma* and the truth of enlightenment. These principles are the foundation of conduct leading to happiness. Their opposites lead to suffering.

Terma (treasure)
Dharma texts and objects concealed for future discovery by enlightened ones such as Guru Padmasambhava.

Tertön (revealer of treasure)
A great master whose special activity is to reveal *terma*.

Three Jewels (konchog sum)
As the first step in any Buddhist practice, one takes refuge in the Three Jewels (*Buddha*, *Dharma*, and *Sangha*) as the source of all blessings that lead to liberation. They are capable of providing refuge from the dangers of *samsara* because they transcend its cause, fundamental ignorance.

Transmission (gyu)
The transfer of wisdom, particularly as the maturation of the practices of meditation and devotion. See *Blessing* and *Empowerment*.

Tsema
The system of logical reasoning by which the nonconceptual truth is verified intellectually.

Tulku
In general, this refers to the compassionate manifestation of enlightenment that ordinary beings can see. In Tibetan Buddhism, beginning with the first Karmapa, this term commonly refers to masters who have intentionally taken rebirth in order to benefit sentient beings.

Twelve Principles of Spiritual Practice of Simplicity (jangwai yonten chu nyi)
To possess only one set of robes, made of felted cloth discarded by others; to eat only one helping of food, once a day, obtained through charity; to live away from luxury, under trees with no house or home; to meditate in charnel grounds, without lying down to sleep, remaining where one is without going anywhere else.

Vajra (dorje)

A scepter most commonly shaped with a round ball in the center and five or nine points on each end. The term *vajra* also refers to the miraculous union of manifestation with the unchanging, ultimate essence. Any apparent form simultaneously arising with the awareness of truth becomes a profound form, endowed with the qualities of *vajra. Vajra* meditation posture is a profound posture conducive to realization. The *vajra of activity* is activity performed with the realization of the union of manifestation and the unchanging, ultimate essence.

Vajradhara (Dorje Chang)

One who has realized the level of enlightenment embodied by the Primordial Buddha.

Vajravarahi (Dorje Pagmo)

Together with Khorlo Dechog, Vajravarahi is the preeminent *yidam* of the Kagyu lineage, through whom masters such as Milarepa and Gampopa attained supreme enlightenment. She is the embodiment of *Mahamudra*, a *sambhogakaya* manifestation of the Perfection of Wisdom. An image of Vajravarahi appears in the portrait of Yeshe Dorje, the Eleventh Karmapa.

Vajrayana (dorje tekpa)

Within the *Mahayana, Vajrayana* consists of the sacred methods of transformation derived from oral transmission for traversing the path to full enlightenment.

Vinaya (dulwa)

The recorded teachings of the Buddha prescribing the rules of conduct called *Vows of Individual Liberation* (t: *so sor tarpai dompa*), through which a monk or nun or layman avoids harming others in order to uproot the causes of rebirth in *samsara.*

Wisdom (yeshe, sherab)

Yeshe (*primordial awareness*) is the wisdom of seeing that all appearances simultaneously arise and disappear within the essential, unchanging emptiness of awareness. If one sees that one's own nature is emptiness, the *five poisons* (hatred, pride, desire, jealousy, and stupidity) transform into *five wisdoms* (t: *yeshe nga*). A *buddha* may be described as one who manifests the three *kayas* and five *wisdoms.* The term *sherab* (*supreme knowledge*) is also translated as wisdom, and can refer to any valid knowledge. *Yeshe* is the perfection of *sherab.*

Yarnay

A retreat practiced in monasteries during the summer season since the time of the Buddha, emphasizing the study of *Vinaya* and philosophy.

Yidam

A divine embodiment of the Buddha that bestows blessing in meditation. The methods of meditating on the *yidam*, taught in *tantra*, bring about the realization of buddhahood. All *yidam* deities are *sambhogakaya* manifestations of the Buddha.

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About Kagyu Thubten Chöling and the Venerable Lama Norlha

Kagyu Thubten Chöling is a monastery and three-year retreat center in Wappingers Falls, New York. It provides a unique opportunity for western students to study and practice traditional Tibetan Buddhism under the guidance of qualified teachers. Lama Norlha, the founder and abbot of the monastery, has placed a singular emphasis on preserving the authenticity of the Buddha's teachings, while making it possible for students of differing backgrounds to engage in genuine practice of the Buddhadharma.

Born in 1938 in eastern Tibet, Lama Norlha became a monk at the age of fourteen, and completed two three-year meditation retreats by the age of twenty-one. His first retreat emphasized the practices of the Kagyu lineage, and his second those of the Nyingma lineage. After escaping from Tibet in 1960, he met Dorje Chang Kalu Rinpoche in India and became his close disciple. Lama Norlha's foremost activity in India involved the establishment of several three-year retreat facilities, the first in that country, where he trained monks in the complete course of study and practice of the Kagyu lineage.

At the urging of Buddhist students in the United States, the Sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa and Dorje Chang Kalu Rinpoche requested Lama Norlha to come to New York City in 1976 to direct Kalu Rinpoche's east coast Dharma centers. Three years later, he founded Kagyu Thubten Chöling Monastery, offering a full range of programs, including introductory courses on Buddhism, seminars taught by masters of the lineage, Tibetan language classes, and, for the first time in the Americas, the traditional three-year intensive meditation retreat. The fifth cycle of the retreats is currently in session, and close to one hundred westerners have participated in the program to date. Participants read and chant from the original Tibetan texts, learning and practicing the same progressive stages of meditation traditionally taught in Tibetan three-year retreats.

Over the past two decades, Lama Norlha has returned to his native Tibet several times in order to re-establish the Dharma and create basic educational and medical resources there. He initiated and sponsored the rebuilding of his own monastery, Korche, with its two retreat facilities. In order to create an equal opportunity for women in Tibet who wish to devote their lives to Dharma study and practice, he built a monastery and retreat center for nuns at Kala Rongo, a sacred place where treasure teachings hidden by Guru Rinpoche were discovered by the famous *tertön* Chogyur Lingpa. As a result of Lama Norlha's efforts, four three-year retreats have been completed at Korche since 1984, and the third retreat at Kala Rongo began in 1998. In addition, Lama Norlha has recently founded a central primary school, over thirty village schools, and a network of health care workers to service the remote region of his homeland in eastern Tibet. He is also engaged in establishing at Kala Rongo the first college for nuns in the history of Tibet.

Lama Norlha is renowned for his mastery of the Six Yogas of Naropa and is one of the most experienced teachers of the traditional Kagyu three-year retreat in the world today. Dedicating his life to the service of his teachers, most notably the Gyalwa Karmapa and Dorje Chang Kalu Rinpoche, and to the guidance of his students, Lama Norlha is known for his tireless efforts in preserving the purity of the Buddha's teachings and the Kagyu lineage.

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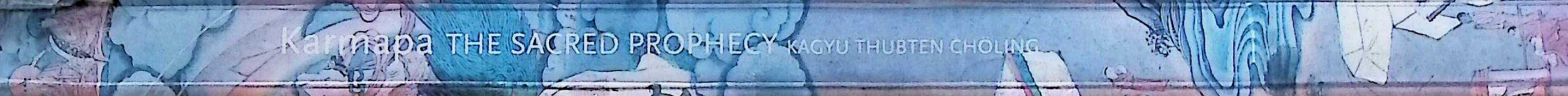
Karmapa THE SACRED PROPHECY KAGYU THUBTEN CHÖLING



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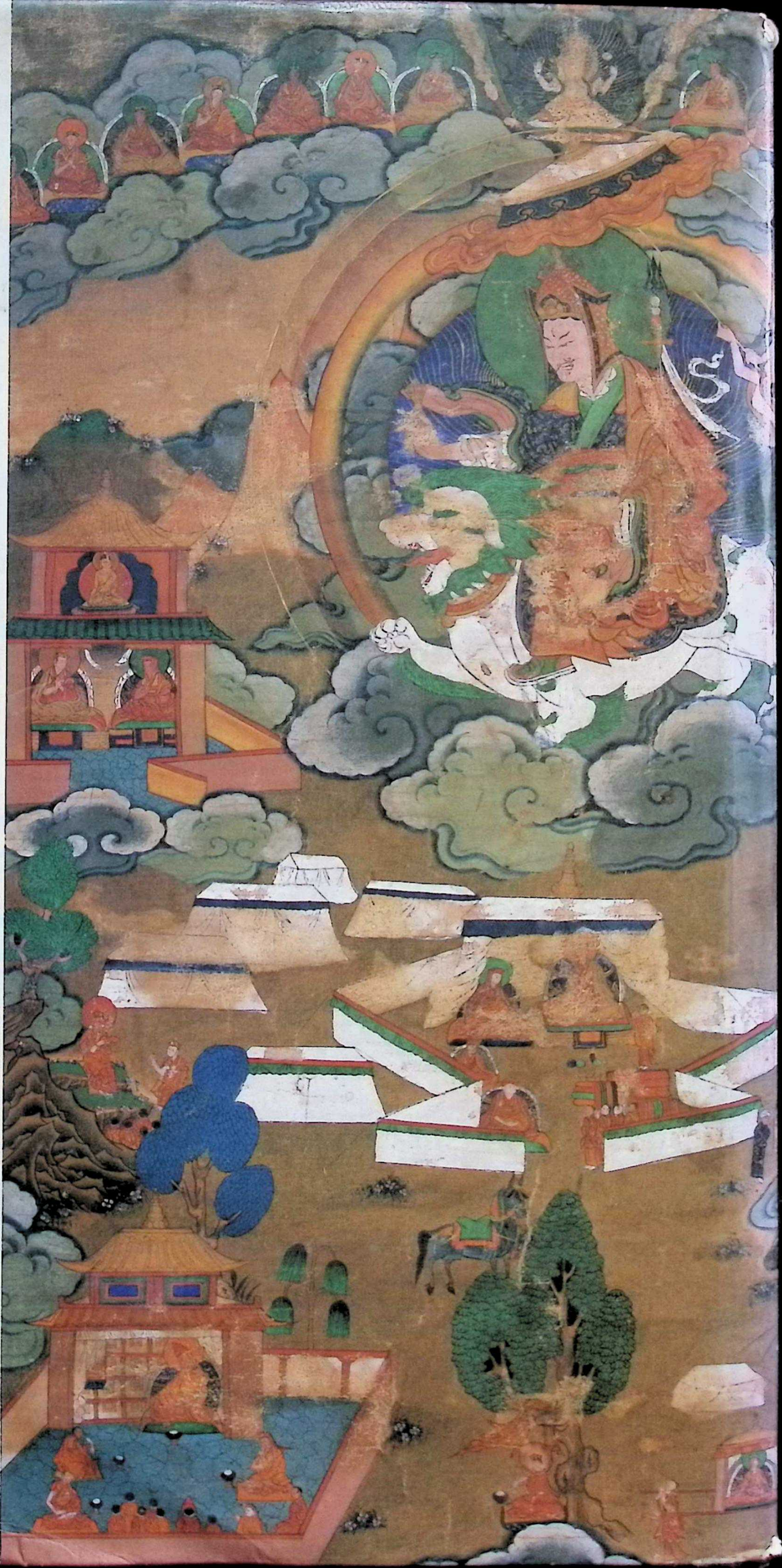
The Kagyu Thubten Chöling Publications Committee is comprised of senior students of Lama Norlha who have completed the traditional Tibetan Buddhist three-year retreat program and professional writers.

Kagyu Thubten Chöling
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